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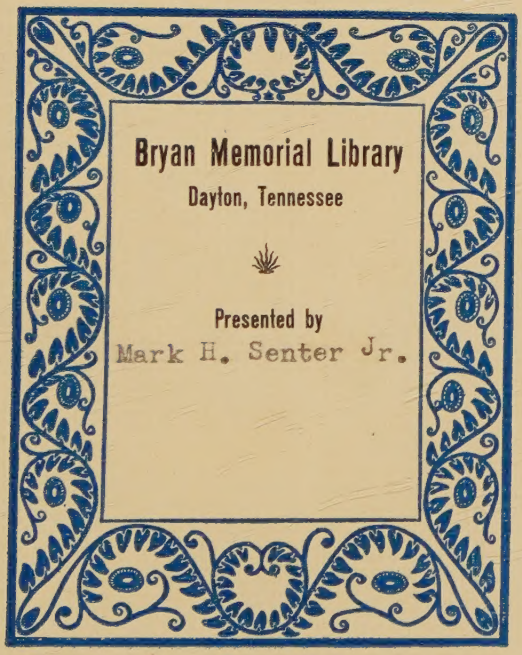

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ROSMERSHOLM: THE LADY FROM THE SEA: HEDDA GABLER: BY HENRIK IBSEN.

AUTHORISED ENGLISH EDITION.

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[1] Published by arrangement with Mr. William Heinemann.

PREFATORY NOTE.

ALONE among Ibsen's modern dramas, *Rosmersholm* has its origin in a definite set of political circumstances. It may assist the reader to grasp the situation if I sketch in a few words the history of the constitutional crisis which so exasperated party spirit in Norway during the ten or twelve years before this play was written.

The Norwegian constitution of 1814 gave the King of Norway and Sweden a suspensive veto on the enactments of the Norwegian Storthing or Parliament, but provided that a bill passed by three successive triennial Storthings should become law without the royal assent. This arrangement worked well enough until about 1870, when the Liberal party became alive to a flaw in the Constitution. The whole legislative and financial power was vested in the Storthing; but the Ministers had no seats in it and acknowledged no responsibility save to the King. Thus the overwhelming Liberal majority in the Storthing found itself baulked at every turn by a Conservative ministry, over which it had no effective control. In 1872, a Bill enacting that Ministers should sit in the Storthing was passed by 80 votes to 29, and was vetoed by the King. It was passed again and again by successive Storthings, the last time by 93 votes to 20; but now King Oscar came forward

with a declaration that *on matters affecting the Constitution* his veto was not suspensive, but absolute, and once more vetoed the Bill. This measure was met by the Storthing with a resolution (9th June 1880) that the Act had become law in spite of the veto. The King ignored the resolution, and, by the advice of his Ministers, claimed an absolute veto, not only on constitutional questions, but on measures of supply. Then the Storthing adopted the last resource provided by the Constitution: it impeached the Ministers before the Supreme Court of the kingdom, a body composed of the Lagthing (an inner committee of the Storthing, fulfilling something like the functions of an Upper House) and the judges of the High Court of Justice. Political rancour ran incredibly high, and there was a great final tussle over the constitution of the Supreme Court; but the Liberals were masters of the situation, and carried all before them. One by one the Ministers were dismissed from office and fined. The King ostentatiously testified his sympathy with them, and selected a new Ministry from the Extreme Right. They failed to carry on the government of the country, and matters were at a deadlock. It was rumoured that the King intended a *coup d'état;* but wiser counsels fortunately prevailed. King Oscar determined to yield gracefully ere it was too late. On the 26th of June 1884 he sent for Johan Sverdrup, the statesman who for a quarter of a century had guided the counsels of the Liberal party. Sverdrup consented to form a Ministry, and the battle ended in a Liberal victory along the whole line.[1]

In the summer of 1885—the year after the conclusion, for the time at any rate, of this political struggle—Ibsen

[1] This paragraph is condensed from an article by me in the *Fortnightly Review* for September 1885, to which the reader may refer for a somewhat fuller account of the political situation at the date of *Rosmersholm*.

paid one of his rare visits to Norway. "Since he had last been home," writes Henrik Jæger, "the great political battle had been fought out, and had left behind it a fanaticism and bitterness of spirit which astounded him. He was struck by the brutality of the prevailing tone; he felt himself painfully affected by the rancorous and vulgar personalities which drowned all rational discussion of the principles at stake; and he observed with sorrow the many enmities to which the contest had given rise. Men who had hitherto been the closest friends were now the bitterest foes; and this although they had done each other no personal wrong, but had merely arrived at different views of life. On the whole, he received the impression—as he lately remarked in conversation—that Norway was inhabited, not by two million human beings, but by two million cats and dogs. This impression has recorded itself in the picture of party divisions presented in *Rosmersholm*. The bitterness of the vanquished is admirably embodied in Rector Kroll; while the victors' craven reluctance to speak out their whole hearts is excellently characterised in the freethinker and opportunist, Mortensgård." I need not add that there is very much more in *Rosmersholm* than a mere representation of a certain state of party-feeling. The political situation, however, forms the background of the spiritual tragedy; wherefore I would beg the reader to remember that the picture of party malice is drawn from the life. The virulence of faction, if it is not greater in small countries than in large, at least assumes different forms.

Unlike *Rosmersholm*, the two remaining plays in this volume depend on no local or personal circumstances, and consequently require no introduction. *The Lady from the Sea* owes it origin, no doubt, to impressions received by the poet during a visit to Norway in 1886. He spent several weeks at Molde (celebrated by Björnson as the most beautiful town

in Norway), and Molde answers in many respects to the scene of *The Lady from the Sea*. It is a "knudepunkt," a ganglion, for the ever-increasing tourist traffic; foreign tourist-steamers pass up the fiord to Veblungsnæs, for Romsdal, returning the following day; and there are other trifling points of agreement between the real and the fictitious locality. This identification, however, is a mere matter of curiosity. Indeed the poet formally disclaims it by placing his scene in "det nordlige Norge,"—a phrase commonly applied only to the regions north of Trondhjem. It may be worth while to note that in depicting Ellida's passion for the sea Ibsen certainly drew to some extent upon a feeling, or at any rate a mood, of his own. In July 1887, at the time when he was writing, or thinking-out, *Fruen fra Havet*, I visited him in his summer quarters at Sæby, in Jutland; and I well remember how he enlarged to me on the "nostalgie de la mer" which would sometimes overtake him at his home in Munich, the central point of Central Europe.

I know of nothing that need be said in the way of preface to *Hedda Gabler*—of nothing, indeed, that *can* be said without trenching upon criticism.

The present volume brings to an end this edition of Ibsen's Dramas, including every play which he has written entirely, or mainly, in prose. So far as I am aware, Ibsen is the first writer of modern and (so-called) realistic plays whose works have been completely and faithfully rendered into English. By "faithfully" I mean without adaptation, or any intentional departure from the text of the original. My fellow-workers and I have done all that lay in our power to represent, as literally as

difference of idiom would allow, every finest shade of the poet's meaning. I dwell on the fact that this is the first enterprise of its kind in English, in order to remind any reader who may be dissatisfied with the result, that we had no precedent to guide us, and that he has no standard with which to compare our efforts. He can scarcely be more dissatisfied than I; though perhaps my fuller knowledge of the difficulties of the case may render me more charitable towards our shortcomings. Mr. Walter Scott will bear witness that he has found it almost impossible to get the final proofs out of my hands, so intent was I on re-touching up to the very last moment, and that I have even put him to considerable expense in making emendations in the stereo-plates. Of lack of diligence, then, I cannot accuse myself; yet I can scarcely open one of the volumes at random without coming across some passage which, if it were possible, I would fain amend. My only comfort lies in the knowledge that if I made the alteration to-day, and turned to it again a year hence, I should probably wish to amend it back again. The great difficulty has been, of course, to strike the golden mean between clumsy literalness and licentious paraphrase; and it is here that I felt the want of some precedent to serve as a guide—or a warning. Nothing would have been easier than to make the translation read smoothly by the simple process of ignoring difficulties. Let me give a trifling instance of my meaning. A friend who has been good enough to read the proofs of *Hedda Gabler* objects to Miss Tesman's first speech in the last Act: "Here you see me in the garb of woe," asking "Why not simply, 'Here you see me in mourning'?" My reply is that in the original Miss Tesman uses a slightly stilted and formal, I might almost say romantic, phrase ("Her kommer jeg *i sorgens farver*"), and that, rightly or wrongly, I hold myself bound to

indicate this. Very likely "the garb of woe" may not be the phrase best adapted for the purpose; but the mere word "mourning" gives no hint of a verbal nicety which Ibsen certainly introduced with deliberate intention, as befitting the character of "Tante Julle." On the stage, it is almost impossible, and would often be injudicious, to pay regard to such minutiæ; but in the printed text it has been my principle, when occasion arose, to subordinate fluency to fidelity. I do not assert that this is the right principle, and still less that I have adhered to it with absolute consistency. I merely wish to explain that vernacular ease has not always been my primary consideration, and that where it seems lacking, there are generally reasons, good, bad, or indifferent, for the deficiency.

It only remains that I should record my debt of gratitude to those who have helped me in the undertaking thus brought to a close. My brother not only translated *Lady Inger of Östråt* and *Rosmersholm*, but, whenever it was possible, revised my proofs, and made many valuable emendations. Unfortunately he was absent from England while most of the sheets were passing through the press; otherwise many rough edges might have been rounded off. My wife, besides translating *The Wild Duck* and *The Lady from the Sea*, has been diligent in proof-reading, and fertile in suggestion. To my friend Mr. H. L. Brækstad my special thanks are due for the unwearying kindness with which he allowed me to consult him on the numberless little points on which a Norwegian alone was competent to advise. Finally, with respect to *Hedda Gabler*, I am greatly indebted to Miss Elizabeth Robins and Miss Marion Lea, under whose joint management that play was produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, London, on April 20, 1891. In preparing the text to be spoken on the stage, Miss Robins and Miss Lea devised many happy turns of

phrase, which, where it was consistent with the aforesaid principle of fidelity, I have (with their permission) gladly adopted. Translation, at any rate of dramatic prose, is an art in which two heads are better than one, and three than two.

W. A.

ROSMERSHOLM.

(1886)

Characters.

JOHANNES ROSMER, *owner of Rosmersholm, retired parish clergyman.*
REBECCA WEST, *living in Rosmer's house.*
RECTOR[1] KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law.*
ULRIC BRENDEL.
PETER MORTENSGÅRD.[2]
MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm.*

The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway.

[1] "Rector" in the Scotch and Continental sense of head-master of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.
[2] Pronounce *Mortensgore.*

ROSMERSHOLM.

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

Act First.

(*Sitting-room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Further back, on the same side, a door. In the background, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy-chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform. The window is open; so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of large old trees, leading down to the farm. It is a summer evening, after sunset.*)

(REBECCA WEST *is sitting in an easy-chair by the window and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. Now and then she looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants. Soon after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*)

MADAM HELSETH. I suppose I'd better begin to lay the table, Miss?

REBECCA WEST. Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

MADAM HELSETH. Don't you feel the draught, Miss, where you're sitting?

REBECCA. Yes, there is a little draught. Perhaps you had better shut the window.

(MADAM HELSETH *shuts the door into the hall, and then comes to the window.*)

MADAM HELSETH (*about to shut the window, looks out*). Why, isn't that the Pastor over there?

REBECCA (*hastily*). Where? (*Rises.*) Yes, it's he. (*Behind the curtain.*) Stand aside—don't let him see us.

MADAM HELSETH (*keeping back from the window*). Only think, Miss, he's beginning to take the path by the mill again.

REBECCA. He went that way the day before yesterday too. (*Peeps out between the curtains and the window-frame.*) But let us see whether——

MADAM HELSETH. Will he venture across the foot-bridge?

REBECCA. That's what I want to see. (*After a pause.*) No, he's turning. He's going by the upper road again. (*Leaves the window.*) A long way round.

MADAM HELSETH. Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on *that* bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened——

REBECCA (*folding up her work*). They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

MADAM HELSETH. Now *I* would say, Miss, that it's the dead that cling to Rosmersholm.

REBECCA (*looks at her*). The dead?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

REBECCA. What makes you fancy that?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, if it weren't for that, there would be no white horse, I suppose.

REBECCA. Now what *is* all this about the white horse, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

REBECCA. Do *you* believe in it then?

MADAM HELSETH (*goes and shuts the window*). Now you're making fun of me, Miss. (*Looks out.*) Why, isn't that Mr. Rosmer on the mill-path again——?

REBECCA (*looks out*). That man there? (*Goes to the window.*) No, it's the Rector!

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, so it is.

REBECCA. How glad I am! You'll see, he's coming here.

MADAM HELSETH. He goes straight over the foot-bridge, *he* does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.

(*She goes out to the right.* REBECCA *stands at the window for a short time; then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark.*)

REBECCA (*goes to the door on the right*). Oh, Madam Helseth, you might give us some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.

MADAM HELSETH (*outside*). Oh yes, Miss, I'll see to it.

REBECCA (*opens the door to the hall*). At last! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector.

RECTOR KROLL (*in the hall, laying down his stick*). Thanks. Then I don't disturb you?

REBECCA. You? How can you ask?

KROLL (*comes in*). Amiable as ever. (*Looks round.*) Is Rosmer upstairs in his room?

REBECCA. No, he's out walking. He has stayed out rather longer than usual; but he's sure to be in directly. (*Motioning him to sit on the sofa.*) Won't you sit down till he comes?

KROLL (*laying down his hat*). Many thanks. (*Sits down and looks about him.*) Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!

REBECCA. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him.

KROLL. And you are too, are you not?

REBECCA. Yes; they have a delightfully soothing effect on me. We had to do without them though, till lately.

KROLL (*nods sadly*). Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata.

REBECCA. Their colours too. They quite bewildered her——

KROLL. I remember, I remember. (*In a lighter tone.*) Well, how are things going out here?

REBECCA. Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way. One day is just like another.—And with you? Your wife——?

KROLL. Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. There's always something or other amiss in a family, especially in times like these.

REBECCA (*after a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair*

beside the sofa). How is it you haven't been near us once during the whole of the holidays?

KROLL. Oh, it doesn't do to make one's self a nuisance——

REBECCA. If you knew how we have missed you——

KROLL. And then I have been away——

REBECCA. Yes, for the last week or two. We've heard of you at political meetings.

KROLL (*nods*). Yes, what do you say to that? Did you think I'd turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

REBECCA (*smiling*). Well, you've always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. Why yes, just for my private amusement. But henceforth it's to be serious, I can tell you.—Do you ever see the Radical papers?

REBECCA. Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that——

KROLL. My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in *your* case.

REBECCA. No, that's what I thought. One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time——

KROLL. And of course one can't expect you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging among us.—But you've seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they've dared to heap on me?

REBECCA. Yes; but it seems to me you gave as good as you got.

KROLL. So I did, though I say it that shouldn't

For now I've tasted blood, and they shall soon feel to their cost that I'm not the man to turn the other cheek—— (*Breaks off.*) But come, come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating.

REBECCA. Oh no, don't let us talk of it.

KROLL. Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm now that you're alone? After our poor Beata——

REBECCA. Thank you, I get on very well. Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing. But otherwise——

KROLL. And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean.

REBECCA. My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other. I've got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it.

KROLL. Why of course you belong to it.

REBECCA. And so long as Mr. Rosmer thinks I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here.

KROLL (*looks at her with emotion*). Do you know, —it's really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done.

REBECCA. Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

KROLL. First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father——

REBECCA. You mustn't suppose that Dr. West was so exacting when we were up in Finmark. It was those terrible boat-voyages up there that broke

him down. But after we moved down here—well yes, the two years before he found rest were certainly hard enough.

KROLL. Weren't the years that followed even harder for you?

REBECCA. Oh how can you talk so? When I was so fond of Beata—and when she, poor thing, stood so sadly in need of care and forbearance.

KROLL. How good it is of you to think of her with so much kindness!

REBECCA (*moves a little nearer*). My dear Rector, you speak so heartily and sincerely that I'm sure there's no unfriendly feeling lurking in the background.

KROLL. Unfriendly feeling? Why, what do you mean?

REBECCA. Well, it would be only natural if it affected you painfully to see a stranger managing the household here at Rosmersholm.

KROLL. Why, how on earth——!

REBECCA. But you have no such feeling. (*Takes his hand.*) Thanks, dear Rector; thank you again and again.

KROLL. How on earth did you get such an idea into your head?

REBECCA. I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare.

KROLL. Then you've been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West. Besides—after all, there's been no essential change. Even while poor Beata was alive—in her last unhappy days—it was you, and you alone, that managed everything.

REBECCA. That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name.

KROLL. Be that as it may—— Do you know, Miss West—for my part, I should have no objection whatever if you—— but I suppose I mustn't say such a thing.

REBECCA. What mustn't you say?

KROLL. If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place——

REBECCA. I have the only place I want, Rector.

KROLL. In fact, yes; but not in——

REBECCA (*interrupting gravely*). For shame, Rector Kroll. How can you sit and joke about such things?

KROLL. Oh well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he's had more than enough of married life already. But all the same——

REBECCA. You're really too absurd, Rector.

KROLL. All the same—— Tell me, Miss West—if the question is allowable—what is your age?

REBECCA. I'm sorry to say I'm over nine-and-twenty, Rector; I'm in my thirtieth year.

KROLL. Indeed. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see: he's five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three. I think it would be most suitable.

REBECCA (*rises*). Of course, of course; most suitable.—Will you stay to tea this evening?

KROLL. Yes, many thanks; I thought of staying. I've something to talk to our good friend about.—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I'd better come out pretty often for the future, as I used to in the old days.

REBECCA. Oh yes, do—do. (*Shakes both his hands.*) Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

KROLL (*gruffly*). Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home.

(JOHANNES ROSMER *enters by the door on the right.*)

REBECCA. Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is here?

JOHANNES ROSMER. Madam Helseth told me.

(RECTOR KROLL *rises.*)

ROSMER (*gently and softly, pressing his hands*). Welcome back to the house, my dear Kroll. (*Lays his hands on* KROLL'S *shoulders and looks into his eyes.*) My dear old friend! I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us.

KROLL. Why, my dear fellow, do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

REBECCA (*to* ROSMER). Yes, just think,—it was only our fancy after all!

ROSMER. Is that really so, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

KROLL (*gravely, in a low voice*). Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your unhappiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race.

ROSMER. Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate. But it was quite unnecessary.—Come, sit down here on the sofa. (*They sit down.*) No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me. We speak about her every day. We feel almost as if she were still one of the household.

KROLL. Do you really?

REBECCA (*lighting the lamp*). Yes, indeed we do.

ROSMER. It's quite natural. We were both so deeply attached to her. And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all we could for her in her affliction. We have nothing to reproach ourselves with.—So that the thought of Beata comes to me as something mild and soothing.

KROLL. You dear, good people. Henceforward, I declare I'll come out and see you every day.

REBECCA (*seats herself in an arm-chair*). Ah, we'll just see whether you keep your word.

ROSMER (*with some hesitation*). My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted. Ever since we've known each other, you've seemed to be cut out by nature to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University.

KROLL. Yes, and I've always been proud of the office. But is there anything particular just now——?

ROSMER. There are many things that I would give much to talk with you about, without reserve—straight from the heart.

REBECCA. Yes indeed, Mr. Rosmer—I should think that must be such a comfort—between old friends——

KROLL. Oh I can tell you I've still more to talk to you about. I suppose you know I've turned a militant politician?

ROSMER. Yes, so you have. How did that come about?

KROLL. I was forced into it in spite of myself. It's impossible to stand idly looking on any longer. Now that the Radicals have unhappily got into

power, there's no time to be lost,—and so I've got our little set of friends in the town to close up their ranks. I tell you it's high time!

REBECCA (*with a faint smile*). Don't you think it may even be a little late?

KROLL. Undeniably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course. But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I. (*Rises and walks up and down.*) But now I've had my eyes opened once for all; for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself.

ROSMER. Into the school? Surely not into *your* school?

KROLL. I tell you it has—into my own school. Only think: it has come to my knowledge that the sixth form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months; and they take in Mortensgård's paper!

REBECCA. The *Beacon?*

KROLL. Yes; nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against us. It's only the dunces at the bottom of the class that have kept clear of it.

REBECCA. Do you feel all this so much, Rector?

KROLL. Do I feel it! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! (*Lower.*) But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there's worse behind. (*Looks round.*) I suppose there's no one listening.

REBECCA. Oh no, of course not.

KROLL. Well then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home. They've destroyed the peace of my family life.

ROSMER (*rises*). What do you say? Into your own house——?

REBECCA (*goes over to the* RECTOR). My dear Rector, what has happened?

KROLL. Would you believe that my own children——? In short, it's Laurits that's the ringleader of the school conspiracy; and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the *Beacon* in.

ROSMER. I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house——

KROLL. No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, where obedience and order have always reigned—where there has never been a shade of disagreement——

REBECCA. How does your wife take all this?

KROLL. Why, that's the most incredible part of it. My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred in my views both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the children on many points. And she blames me for what has happened. She says I tyrannise over the children. As if it weren't necessary to—— Well, you see how my house is divided against itself. But of course I say as little about it as possible. It's best to keep such things quiet. (*Wanders up the room.*) Ah, well, well, well. (*Stands at the window with his hands behind his back and looks out.*)

REBECCA (*comes up close to* ROSMER, *and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the* RECTOR *does not hear her*). Do it now!

ROSMER (*also in a low voice*). Not this evening.

REBECCA (*as before*). Yes, just this evening.

(*Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp.*)

KROLL (*comes forward*). Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has cast its shadow over both my domestic and my official life. And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapon I can lay my hands on? Combat it I will, trust me for that; both with tongue and pen.

ROSMER. Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

KROLL. At any rate I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State. And I think it's the duty of every right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise. In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening.

ROSMER. Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean——? What can I——?

KROLL. You can stand by your old friends. Do as we do. Lend a hand, with all your might.

REBECCA. But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr. Rosmer's distaste for public life.

KROLL. He must get over his distaste.—You're too retiring altogether, Rosmer. You sit here and wall yourself in with your historical collections. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees and so forth; but this is no time for hobbies of that

sort—worse luck! You can't imagine the state things are in all over the country. There's hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy. It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again.

ROSMER. I don't doubt it. But I'm the last man to undertake such work.

REBECCA. And besides, I think Mr. Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to.

KROLL (*with surprise*). Wider?

REBECCA. Yes; or freer, if you like—less biassed.

KROLL. What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you're not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand politics. But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought.

KROLL. Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement? But in any case you're quite mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals both out here and in the town. They're neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the *Beacon*.

REBECCA. Yes; Mortensgård has great influence over many people hereabouts.

KROLL. Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a schoolmaster on account of his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of

the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he's going to enlarge his paper; I know on good authority that he's looking about him for a capable assistant.

REBECCA. I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him.

KROLL. That's just what we're going to do. We've to-day bought the *County News;* there was no difficulty about the money question. But—— (*Turns to* ROSMER.) Now I come to my real errand. The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing——. Tell me, Rosmer,—don't you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause.

ROSMER (*almost in consternation*). I!

REBECCA. Oh how can you think of such a thing?

KROLL. I can quite understand your distaste for public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies. But an editor's work is less public, or rather——

ROSMER. No no, my dear friend, you mustn't ask me to do this.

KROLL. I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too; but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down——. Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

ROSMER. I cannot, Kroll. I am not fit for it.

KROLL. Not fit? That's what you said when your father got you your living——

ROSMER. And I was right. That was why I resigned it.

KROLL. Oh if you're only as good an editor as you were a clergyman we shan't complain.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll—I tell you once for all —I can't do it.

KROLL. Well, at any rate you'll lend us your name.

ROSMER. My name?

KROLL. Yes, the mere name, Johannes Rosmer, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I'm denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your benevolence and integrity—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the respect due to your former position as a clergyman still clings to you; and, to crown all, you have your venerable family name!

ROSMER. Oh, my family name——

KROLL (*points to the portraits*). Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen and soldiers; government officials of high place and trust; gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a family that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. (*Lays his hand on* ROSMER'S *shoulder.*) Rosmer—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. (*Turns round.*) What do *you* say, Miss West?

REBECCA (*laughing softly, as if to herself*). My dear Rector, all this strikes me as ludicrous in the extreme.

KROLL. What do you say? Ludicrous?

REBECCA. Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly——

ROSMER (*quickly*). No no—be quiet! Not just now!

KROLL (*looks from one to the other*). My dear friends, what on earth——? (*Interrupting himself.*) Hm!

(MADAM HELSETH *appears in the doorway on the right.*)

MADAM HELSETH. There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

ROSMER (*relieved*). Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

MADAM HELSETH. Into the sitting-room?

ROSMER. Yes, of course.

MADAM HELSETH. But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

REBECCA. Why, what does he look like, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, he's not much to look at, Miss, and that's a fact.

ROSMER. Didn't he give his name?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes—I think he said his name was Hekman or something of the sort.

ROSMER. I know nobody of that name.

MADAM HELSETH. And then he said he was called Uldric too.

ROSMER (*in surprise*). Ulric—Hetman! Was that it?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, so it was—Hetman.

KROLL. I've surely heard that name before——

REBECCA. Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being——

ROSMER (*to* KROLL). It's Ulric Brendel's pseudonym.

KROLL. That blackguard Ulric Brendel's—of course it is.

REBECCA. Then he's still alive.

ROSMER. I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

KROLL. When last I heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

ROSMER. Ask him to come in, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, very well.

(*She goes out.*)

KROLL. Are you really going to let a man like that into your house?

ROSMER. You know he was once my tutor.

KROLL. Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

ROSMER (*with a touch of bitterness*). Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment.

KROLL. Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer.—Well!

(MADAM HELSETH *opens the door on the right for* ULRIC BRENDEL, *and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him. He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard; somewhat worn, but*

active and well set up. He is dressed like a common tramp; threadbare frock-coat; worn-out shoes; no shirt visible. He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand.)

ULRIC BRENDEL (*hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the* RECTOR, *and holds out his hand*). Good evening, Johannes!

KROLL. Excuse me——

BRENDEL. Did you expect to see me again? And inside these hated walls too?

KROLL. Excuse me—— (*Pointing.*) There——

BRENDEL (*turns*). Right. There he is. Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved——!

ROSMER (*takes his hand*). My old teacher.

BRENDEL. Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

ROSMER. You are heartily welcome here now Be sure of that.

BRENDEL. Ah, this charming lady——? (*Bows.*) Mrs. Rosmer, of course.

ROSMER. Miss West.

BRENDEL. Presumably a near relation. And yonder unknown——? A brother of the cloth, I see.

ROSMER. Rector Kroll.

BRENDEL. Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit!—Weren't you a student of the humanities in the days of your youth?

KROLL. Of course I was.

BRENDEL. Why *Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

KROLL. Pardon me——

BRENDEL. Weren't you——

KROLL. Pardon me——

BRENDEL. ——one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

KROLL. Very likely. But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship.

BRENDEL. Well well! *Nach Belieben, Herr Doctor.* It's all one to me. Ulric Brendel remains the man he is for all that.

REBECCA. You are on your way into town, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL. You have hit it, gracious lady. At certain intervals, I am obliged to strike a blow for existence. It goes against the grain; but—*enfin*—unavoidable necessity——

ROSMER. Oh but, my dear Mr. Brendel, you must allow me to help you. In one way or another, I'm sure——

BRENDEL. Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes—never!

ROSMER. But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to——

BRENDEL. Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together. (*To* RECTOR KROLL.) Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably

decent, reputable, and roomy Public Hall in your estimable city?

KROLL. The roomiest is the hall of the Workmen's Society.

BRENDEL. And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

KROLL. I have nothing to do with it.

REBECCA (*to* BRENDEL). You should apply to Peter Mortensgård.

BRENDEL. *Pardon, madame*—what sort of an idiot is he?

ROSMER. What makes you take him for an idiot?

BRENDEL. Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

KROLL. I did not expect that answer.

BRENDEL. But I will conquer my reluctance. There's nothing else for it. When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career——. It's settled. I will approach this individual—will open personal negotiations——

ROSMER. Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

BRENDEL. Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously.—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained.

ROSMER. How?

BRENDEL. I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand; to step forth; to assert myself. We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial, age.—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation.

KROLL. *You* too?

BRENDEL (*to them all*). Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

KROLL. No, I must candidly confess that——

REBECCA. I have read several of them. They belonged to my foster-father.

BRENDEL. Fair lady, then you have wasted your time. For let me tell you, they are so much rubbish.

REBECCA. Indeed!

BRENDEL. What you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows. No one —except myself.

REBECCA. How does that happen?

BRENDEL. Because they are not written.

ROSMER. But, my dear Mr. Brendel——

BRENDEL. You know, my Johannes, that I'm a bit of a Sybarite—a *Feinschmecker* I've been so all my days. I like to take my pleasures in solitude; for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold. So you see, when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me, and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I fashioned them into poems, into visions, into pictures —in the rough, as it were, you understand.

ROSMER. Yes, yes.

BRENDEL. Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy. I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so great, so intoxicating——!

KROLL. Hm!

ROSMER. But you've written nothing down?

BRENDEL. Not a word. The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up. I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their husbands' arms. But I will offer them up, all the same. I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emancipation. A series of carefully worked-up lectures—over the whole country——!

REBECCA (*with animation*). This is noble of you, Mr. Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess.

ROSMER. The only thing.

REBECCA (*looking meaningly at* ROSMER). How many are there who do as much—who *dare* do as much?

ROSMER (*returning the look*). Who knows?

BRENDEL. My audience is touched. That does my heart good—and strengthens my will. So now I will proceed to action. But, one thing more. (*To the* RECTOR.) Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask.

KROLL. Yes, there is. I am the president, at your service.

BRENDEL. I saw it in your face! Well, it's not impossible that I may come to you and inscribe myself as a member for a week.

KROLL. Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week.

BRENDEL. *A la bonne heure*, Herr Pedagogue. Ulric Brendel has never been addicted to that sort of Society. (*Turns.*) But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories. I must get on to the town and find myself a suitable lodging. I presume there is a decent hotel in the place.

REBECCA. Won't you take something before you go?

BRENDEL. Of what sort, gracious lady?

REBECCA. A cup of tea, or——

BRENDEL. I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality. (*Waves his hand.*) Farewell, ladies and gentlemen! (*Goes towards the door, but turns again.*) Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

ROSMER. Yes, most willingly.

BRENDEL. Good. Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs.

ROSMER. Nothing else?

BRENDEL. For you see I'm travelling on foot this time. My box is being sent after me.

ROSMER. Quite so. But is there nothing else?

BRENDEL. Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat.

ROSMER. Yes, yes; certainly I can.

BRENDEL. And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat——

ROSMER. That we'll manage too. As soon as you let us know the address, we will send the things in.

BRENDEL. By no means. Pray take no trouble on my account! I will take the bagatelles with me.

ROSMER. As you please. Come upstairs with me then.

REBECCA. Let me go. Madam Helseth and I will see to it.

BRENDEL. I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady to——!

REBECCA. Oh, nonsense! Come along, Mr. Brendel.

(*She goes out to the right.*)

ROSMER (*detaining him*). Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

BRENDEL. I'm sure I don't know of anything. Well, yes, damn it all—now that I think of it——! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

ROSMER. Let us see. (*Opens his purse.*) Here are two ten-crown notes.

BRENDEL. Well well, never mind. I can take them. I can always get them changed in the town. Thanks in the meantime. Remember it was two tenners you lent me. Good-night, my own dear boy! Good-night, respected Sir!

(*Goes out to the right.* ROSMER *takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him.*)

KROLL. Merciful Heaven—so *that* is the Ulric Brendel people once expected such great things of.

ROSMER (*quietly*). At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think that's such a small matter after all.

KROLL. What? A life like his! I almost believe he has it in him to turn your head afresh.

ROSMER. Oh no. My mind is quite clear now, upon all points.

KROLL. I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so terribly impressionable.

ROSMER. Let us sit down. I wish to talk to you.

KROLL. Yes; let us.

(*They sit down on the sofa.*)

ROSMER (*after a slight pause*). Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

KROLL. Yes, your life has become pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have made yourself a home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

ROSMER. My dear friend, don't say that. The wound will heal again in time.

KROLL. Never; never. The barb will always rankle. Things can never be as they were.

ROSMER. Listen to me, Kroll. We have been fast friends for many and many a year. Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship could ever go to wreck?

KROLL. I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

ROSMER. You lay such decisive stress on uniformity of opinions and views.

KROLL. No doubt; but we two are in practical agreement—at any rate on the great essential questions.

ROSMER (*in a low voice*). No; not now.

KROLL (*tries to jump up*). What is this?

ROSMER (*holding him*). No; you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll.

KROLL. What can this mean? I don't understand you. Speak plainly!

ROSMER. A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again. And so now I stand——

KROLL. Where—where, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Where your children stand.

KROLL. You? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

ROSMER. On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

KROLL (*bows his head*). An apostate! Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

ROSMER. I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy in what you call my apostasy. But nevertheless, I suffered deeply; for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

KROLL. Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! (*Looks gloomily at him.*) To think that you too can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this unhappy land.

ROSMER. It is the work of emancipation I wish to help on.

KROLL. Oh yes, I know. That is what both the tempters and their victims call it. But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our whole social life?

ROSMER. I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending

parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible. I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country.

KROLL. So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part, it seems to me we're all in a fair way to be dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive.

ROSMER. That's just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

KROLL. What task?

ROSMER. That of making all the people of this country noble-men.

KROLL. All the people——?

ROSMER. As many as possible, at any rate.

KROLL. By what means?

ROSMER. By freeing their minds and purifying their wills, of course.

KROLL. You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will *you* free them? Will *you* purify them?

ROSMER. No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They themselves must accomplish it.

KROLL. And you think they can?

ROSMER. Yes.

KROLL. By their own strength?

ROSMER. Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

KROLL (*rises*). Is this becoming language for a priest?

ROSMER. I am no longer a priest

KROLL. Well but—the faith of your childhood——?

ROSMER. Is mine no longer.

KROLL. No longer——!

ROSMER (*rises*). I have given it up. I *had* to give it up, Kroll.

KROLL (*controlling his agitation*). Oh, indeed—— Yes, yes, yes. I suppose one thing goes with another. Was this your reason for leaving the church?

ROSMER. As soon as I saw my way clearly—when I had fully assured myself that this was no passing temptation, but a thing I neither could nor would undo—then I went.

KROLL. So this has been working in you all this time! And we—your friends, have heard nothing of it. Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

ROSMER. Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone. And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain. I thought I might live on here, in quiet happiness, as before. I wished to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me. I wished to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me.

KROLL. Apostate! Every word proves it. But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why precisely now?

ROSMER. You yourself have driven me to it, Kroll.

KROLL. I? Have I driven you——!

ROSMER. When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read of all the uncharitable speeches you made—all your acrimonious onslaughts on your opponents—and the scornful condemnation you heaped on them—oh Kroll, to think that you—you—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me. Men are growing evil in this struggle. Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls. That is why I am now stepping forward and openly avowing myself for what I am. I, too, will try my strength. Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

KROLL. Never in this world will I make peace with the destructive forces in society.

ROSMER. Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must.

KROLL. Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know. I owe him no consideration.

ROSMER. Does that apply to me too?

KROLL. It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer.

ROSMER. But *is* this a breach then?

KROLL. Is it? You have broken with all who have hitherto been your friends. You must take the consequences.

(REBECCA WEST *enters from the right, and opens the door wide.*)

REBECCA. There now; he's on his way to his great sacrifice. And now we can go to supper. Will you come in, Rector?

KROLL (*takes up his hat*). Good-night, Miss West. I have nothing more to do here.

REBECCA (*eagerly*). What is this? (*Shuts the door and comes forward.*) Have you spoken?

ROSMER. He knows all.

KROLL. We won't let you go, Rosmer. We will force you to come back to us.

ROSMER. I can never stand where I did.

KROLL. We shall see. You are not the man to bear being left alone.

ROSMER. I shall not be so completely alone after all. There are two of us to bear the loneliness together.

KROLL. Ah——! (*A suspicion appears in his face.*) This too! Beata's words!

ROSMER. Beata's——?

KROLL (*shaking off the thought*). No, no—that was vile. Forgive me.

ROSMER. What? What do you mean?

KROLL. Don't ask. Bah! Forgive me. Good-bye!

(*Goes towards the entrance door.*)

ROSMER (*follows him*). Kroll! Our friendship must not end like this. I will come and see you to-morrow.

KROLL (*in the hall; turns*). You shall never cross my threshold again.

(*He takes up his stick and goes out.*)

(ROSMER *stands for a moment in the doorway; then shuts the door and walks up to the table.*)

ROSMER. It does not matter, Rebecca. We will see it out, we two faithful friends—you[1] and I.

[1] From this point, and throughout when alone, Rosmer and Rebecca use the "du" of intimate friendship in speaking to each other.

REBECCA. What do you think he meant when he said, "That was vile"?

ROSMER. Don't trouble about that, dear. He himself didn't believe what was in his mind. To-morrow I'll go in and see him. Good-night!

REBECCA. Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

ROSMER. To-night as usual. I feel so relieved, now it is over. You see—I am quite calm, Rebecca. Do you, too, take it calmly. Good-night!

REBECCA. Good-night, dear friend! Sleep well!

(ROSMER *goes out by the hall door; his steps are heard ascending the staircase.*)

(REBECCA *goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove. Shortly after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*)

REBECCA. You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth. Mr. Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home.

MADAM HELSETH. Has the Rector gone? What is wrong with him?

REBECCA (*takes up her knitting*). He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing——

MADAM HELSETH. Dear, how odd! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening.

REBECCA. If only he doesn't meet the white horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now.

MADAM HELSETH. Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things.

REBECCA. Well, well, well——

MADAM HELSETH (*softly*). Do you really think some one is to go soon, Miss?

REBECCA. No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

MADAM HELSETH. Good-night, Miss.

(REBECCA *goes out to the right, with her knitting.*)

MADAM HELSETH (*turns the lamp down, shaking her head, and muttering to herself*). Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

Act Second.

(JOHANNES ROSMER'S *study. Entrance door on the left. In the back, a doorway with a curtain drawn aside, leading into* ROSMER'S *bedroom. On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers. Bookshelves and cases round the room. The furniture is simple. On the left an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it.*)

(JOHANNES ROSMER, *in a smoking-jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet, and reading a little here and there.*)

(*There is a knock at the door on the left.*)

ROSMER (*without moving*). Come in.

REBECCA WEST (*enters, dressed in a morning wrapper*). Good morning.

ROSMER (*turning the leaves of the pamphlet*). Good morning, dear. Do you want anything?

REBECCA. I only wanted to hear if you had slept well.

ROSMER. Oh I've had such peaceful, delightful sleep. No dreams—— (*Turns.*) And you?

REBECCA. Oh yes, thanks—towards morning——

ROSMER. I don't know when I've felt so light-hearted as I do now. I'm so glad I managed to speak out at last.

REBECCA. Yes, you oughtn't to have kept silence so long, Rosmer.

ROSMER. I myself don't understand how I could be such a coward.

REBECCA. It wasn't precisely cowardice——

ROSMER. Oh yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at bottom of it.

REBECCA. All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last. (*Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him.*) But now I want to tell you of something I've done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it.

ROSMER. Vexed? How can you think——?

REBECCA. Well, it was perhaps rather high-handed of me, but——

ROSMER. Let me hear what it was.

REBECCA. Yesterday evening, when that Ulric Brendel was starting—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgård.

ROSMER (*a little doubtful*). Why, my dear Rebecca—— Well, what did you say?

REBECCA. I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could.

ROSMER. Dear, you shouldn't have done that. You have only done Brendel harm. And Mortensgård is not a man I care to have anything to do with. You know about that old affair between us.

REBECCA. But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

ROSMER. I? With Mortensgård? In what way do you mean?

REBECCA. Well, you know you can't feel exactly secure after this breach with your old friends.

ROSMER (*looks at her and shakes his head*). Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge? That they would be capable of——?

REBECCA. In the first heat of anger, dear—— No one can be sure. I think—after the way the Rector took it——

ROSMER. Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that. Kroll is a gentleman, through and through. I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him. I will talk to them all. Oh you'll see how easily it will all go——

(MADAM HELSETH *appears at the door on the left.*)

REBECCA (*rises*). What is it, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall.

ROSMER (*rises hastily*). Kroll!

REBECCA. The Rector! Dear me——

MADAM HELSETH. He asked if he might come up and see Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER (*to* REBECCA). What did I tell you?—Of course he may. (*Goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*) Come up, dear friend! I'm so glad to see you!

(ROSMER *stands holding open the door.* MADAM HELSETH *goes out.* REBECCA *draws the curtain before the doorway in the back, and then begins arranging things in the room.*)

(RECTOR KROLL *enters with his hat in his hand.*)

ROSMER (*with quiet emotion*). I knew it couldn't be the last time——

KROLL. I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday.

ROSMER. Ah yes, Kroll; I was sure you would, now that you've had time to reflect.

KROLL. You misunderstand me completely. (*Lays his hat on the table.*) It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone.

ROSMER. Why may not Miss West——?

REBECCA. No no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

KROLL (*looks at her from head to foot*). And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to——

REBECCA (*surprised*). How do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning wrapper about the house?

KROLL. Heaven forbid! I know nothing of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Why, Kroll—you're not yourself to-day!

REBECCA. Allow me to wish you good morning, Rector Kroll.

(*She goes out to the left.*)

KROLL. By your leave—— (*Sits on the sofa.*)

ROSMER. Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us have a friendly chat.

(*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the* RECTOR.)

KROLL. I haven't closed an eye since yesterday. I've been lying thinking and thinking all night.

ROSMER. And what do you say to things to-day?

KROLL. It will be a long story, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you news of Ulric Brendel.

ROSMER. Has he called on you?

KROLL. No. He took up his quarters in a low public-house—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money. Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter.

ROSMER. Then he's incorrigible after all.

KROLL. He had pawned the coat too; but I'm told that has been redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom?

ROSMER. Perhaps by you?

KROLL. No; by the distinguished Mr. Mortensgård.

ROSMER. Ah, indeed.

KROLL. I understand that Mr. Brendel's first visit was to the "idiot" and "plebeian."

ROSMER. Well, it was lucky for him——

KROLL. To be sure it was. (*Leans over the table towards* ROSMER.) But now we come to a matter that it's my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, what can it be?

KROLL. It is this: there are things going on behind your back in this house.

ROSMER. How can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you're aiming at?

KROLL. Precisely. I can quite understand it on

her part. She has been so long accustomed to having everything her own way here. But all the same——

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, you're utterly mistaken. She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever.

KROLL. Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the *Beacon?*

ROSMER. Oh, you're thinking of the few lines she sent by Ulric Brendel?

KROLL. Then you *have* found it out. And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man?

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the matter ever entered her head. And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have.

KROLL. Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought. For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

ROSMER. Yes, she does. We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship.

KROLL (*looks at him and slowly shakes his head*). Oh, you blind, deluded man!

ROSMER. I? Why do you say that?

KROLL. Because I dare not—I *will* not think the worst. No no, let me say my say out.—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

ROSMER. I surely need not answer that question.

KROLL. Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part. Will you submit to a sort of investigation——?

ROSMER. Investigation?

KROLL. Yes; will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this business of your apostasy—well, your emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, ask what you please. I have nothing to conceal.

KROLL. Then tell me—what do you think was the real, the ultimate reason why Beata put an end to her life?

ROSMER. Can you have any doubt on the matter? Or rather, can you ask for reasons for what an unhappy, irresponsible invalid may do?

KROLL. Are you certain that Beata was so completely irresponsible for her actions? The doctors, at any rate, were not convinced of it.

ROSMER. If the doctors had ever seen her as I have so often seen her, for days and nights together, they would have had no doubts.

KROLL. I had no doubts either, then.

ROSMER. Oh no, unfortunately, there wasn't the smallest room for doubt. I have told you of her wild frenzies of passion, which she expected me to return. Oh, how they appalled me! And then her causeless, consuming self-reproaches during the last few years.

KROLL. Yes, when she had learnt that she must remain childless all her life.

ROSMER. Yes, think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control!—How could you call her responsible for her actions?

KROLL. Hm——. Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time, dealing with the rationale of marriage—according to the "advanced" ideas of the day?

ROSMER. I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind. The Doctor left her his library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely don't suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours. It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations.

KROLL. One thing at any rate I can tell you—and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life that you might be free to live happily, and—after your own heart.

ROSMER (*starts half up from his chair*). What do you mean by that?

KROLL. Listen to me quietly, Rosmer; for now I can speak of it. In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour out to me all her anguish and despair.

ROSMER. About this same thing?

KROLL. No. The first time she came and declared that you were on the way to perversion—that you were going to break with the faith of your fathers.

ROSMER (*eagerly*). What you say is impossible,

Kroll! Absolutely impossible! You must be mistaken.

KROLL. And why?

ROSMER. Because while Beata was alive I was still wrestling with myself in doubt. And that fight I fought out in solitude and utter silence. I don't believe that even Rebecca——

KROLL. Rebecca?

ROSMER. Oh well — Miss West. I call her Rebecca for convenience' sake.

KROLL. So I've remarked.

ROSMER. So it's inconceivable to me how Beata could have got hold of the idea. And why didn't she speak to me myself about it? She never did—she never said a single word.

KROLL. Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you.

ROSMER. And why didn't you?

KROLL. At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind. Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later. This time she seemed calmer; but as she was going she said: "They may soon expect the white horse at Rosmersholm now."

ROSMER. Yes, yes. The white horse—she often spoke of it.

KROLL. And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

ROSMER (*almost speechless*). What do you say——? I marry——?

KROLL. That was on a Thursday afternoon. On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race.

ROSMER. And you never warned us——?

KROLL. You know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near.

ROSMER. Yes, I know. But all the same—you *should* have warned us!

KROLL. I did think of it; but not till too late.

ROSMER. But why did you not afterwards——? Why have you said nothing about all this?

KROLL. What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening.

ROSMER. Then you have changed your mind?

KROLL. Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your childhood?

ROSMER (*looks fixedly, straight before him*). I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

KROLL. Incomprehensible or not—there it is And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

ROSMER. Accusation? Was *that* an accusation?

KROLL. Perhaps you didn't notice the way she worded it. She was to go, she said—why?

ROSMER. In order that I might marry Rebecca——

KROLL. Those were not precisely her words.

Beata used a different expression. She said: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca *at once*."

ROSMER (*looks at him for a moment; then rises*). Now I understand you, Kroll.

KROLL. And what then? What is your answer?

ROSMER (*still quiet and self-restrained*). To such an unheard of——? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

KROLL (*rises*). Well and good.

ROSMER (*stands in front of him*). Listen to me. For more than a year—ever since Beata left us—Rebecca West and I have lived alone here at Rosmersholm. During all that time you have known of Beata's accusation against us. But I have never for a moment noticed that you disapproved of Rebecca's living in my house.

KROLL. I didn't know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an —emancipated woman.

ROSMER. Ah! Then you don't believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You don't believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

KROLL. I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

ROSMER. And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two?

KROLL. Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—hm——

ROSMER. And what?

KROLL. ——and free love,—since you will have it.

ROSMER (*in a low voice*). And you're not ashamed to say this to me! You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

KROLL. For that very reason. I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then —we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I shall not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

ROSMER. Save myself? How——?

(MADAM HELSETH *peeps in at the door on the left.*)

ROSMER. What do you want?

MADAM HELSETH. I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

ROSMER. Miss West is not up here.

MADAM HELSETH. Isn't she? (*Looks round the room.*) Well, that's strange. (*She goes.*)

ROSMER. You were saying——?

KROLL. Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one; and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse——

ROSMER. Oh, how little you know me——!

KROLL. Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this: if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about

by her evil influence, should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. It's a purely personal matter, after all. There's no need to proclaim these things from the housetops.

ROSMER. I feel an absolute need to get out of a false and ambiguous position.

KROLL. But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that. Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial — yes, and respectful observance of all that is accepted and recognised by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the family tradition of the Rosmers.

ROSMER. My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. It seems to me an imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression.

KROLL (*looks at him severely*). Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer; let such things alone; you are the last man for such a task. You were born to be a quiet student.

ROSMER. Perhaps so. But for once in a way I intend to take an active part in the battle of life.

KROLL. And do you know what that battle of

life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends.

ROSMER (*quietly*). They can't all be such fanatics as you.

KROLL. You are a credulous creature, Rosmer. An inexperienced creature too. You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst over you.

(MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door on the left.*)

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West wants to know——

ROSMER. What is it?

MADAM HELSETH. There's a man downstairs asking to speak a word with the Pastor.

ROSMER. Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

MADAM HELSETH. No, it's that Mortensgård.

ROSMER. Mortensgård!

KROLL. Aha! So we've come to that, have we? —Already!

ROSMER. What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs.

ROSMER. Tell him I'm engaged.

KROLL (*to* MADAM HELSETH). Let him come up, Madam Helseth.

(MADAM HELSETH *goes.*)

KROLL (*takes up his hat*). I retire from the field —for the moment. But the main battle has still to be fought.

ROSMER. Upon my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgård.

KROLL. I don't believe you. On no subject and

in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you. It's war to the knife now. We'll try whether we can't make you harmless.

ROSMER. Oh Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

KROLL. I? And *you* think you have a right to tell me so! Remember Beata!

ROSMER. Still harping upon that?

KROLL. No. You must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left.

(PETER MORTENSGÅRD *enters softly and quietly from the left. He is a little wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard.*)

KROLL (*with a look of hatred*). Ah, the *Beacon* burning at Rosmersholm! (*Buttons his coat.*) Well, now I can have no more doubt what course to steer.

MORTENSGÅRD (*quietly*). The *Beacon* shall always be kept alight to guide the Rector home.

KROLL. Yes; you have long shown your good-will. To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against our neighbours——

MORTENSGÅRD. Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments.

KROLL. Not even in the seventh?

ROSMER. Kroll——!

MORTENSGÅRD. If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business.

KROLL (*with repressed spite*). The Pastor's? Oh yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for that.—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

(*Goes out, and slams the door behind him.*)

ROSMER (*keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself*). Well well—so be it then. (*Turns.*) Will you tell me, Mr. Mortensgård, what brings you out here to me?

MORTENSGÅRD. It was really Miss West I came to see. I thought I must thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday.

ROSMER. I know she wrote to you. Have you seen her then?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes, for a short time. (*Smiles slightly.*) I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. My views are altered in many respects. I might almost say in all.

MORTENSGÅRD. So Miss West told me; and that's why she thought it would be well for me to come up and talk things over with the Pastor.

ROSMER. What things, Mr. Mortensgård?

MORTENSGÅRD. May I announce in the *Beacon* that your views are altered—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

ROSMER. Certainly you may. I would even beg you to make the announcement.

MORTENSGÅRD. Then we'll have it in to-morrow morning's issue. It will cause a sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm finds he can join the army of light, in that sense too.

ROSMER. I don't quite understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD. I mean that it adds greatly to the moral force of our party to gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles.

ROSMER (*somewhat surprised*). Then you don't know——? Didn't Miss West tell you that too?

MORTENSGÅRD. What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in a great hurry. She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself.

ROSMER. Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely and on every side. I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church. Henceforth they are nothing to me.

MORTENSGÅRD (*looks at him in amazement*). Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more——! Pastor Rosmer himself renounces——!

ROSMER. Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years. That too you may announce in the *Beacon* to-morrow.

MORTENSGÅRD. That too? No, my dear Pastor —excuse me—I don't think it's wise to touch on that side of the matter.

ROSMER. Not touch on it?

MORTENSGÅRD. Not at present, I mean.

ROSMER. I don't understand——

MORTENSGÅRD. Well you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do. But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take active part in the movement —I presume you would like to be of as much service as possible both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation.

ROSMER. Yes, that is my earnest wish.

MORTENSGÅRD. Well; but now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you come forward openly with

the announcement of your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset.

ROSMER. Do you think so?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes; believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, in this part of the country at any rate. And besides, we have plenty of freethinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I almost might say too many. What the party requires, is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. That's what we're sadly in need of. And therefore I advise you to say nothing about what doesn't concern the public. That's my view of the matter, at least.

ROSMER. I understand. Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you won't have anything to do with me?

MORTENSGÅRD (*shakes his head*). I scarcely dare, Pastor Rosmer. I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that's actively opposed to the Church.

ROSMER. Then you have yourself returned to the Church?

MORTENSGÅRD. That concerns no one but myself.

ROSMER. Ah, so that's it. Now I understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD. Pastor Rosmer—you should remember that I—I in particular—have not full liberty of action.

ROSMER. What trammels you?

MORTENSGÅRD. The fact that I am a marked man.

ROSMER. Ah—indeed.

MORTENSGÅRD. A marked man, Pastor Rosmer. You, above all men, should remember that; for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me.

ROSMER. If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt less harshly with your offence.

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes, I don't doubt it. But it's too late now. You have branded me once for all—branded me for life. I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means. But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. I?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes. You surely don't suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? And I hear the *County News* is going to be very savage in future. You too may find yourself a marked man before long.

ROSMER. In personal matters, Mr. Mortensgård, I feel myself beyond reach of attack. My life is irreproachable.

MORTENSGÅRD (*with a quiet smile*). That's a large word, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER. Perhaps; but I have a right to use it.

MORTENSGÅRD. Even if you were to examine your conduct as closely as you once examined mine?

ROSMER. Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But it might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

ROSMER. Will you be good enough to let me hear what it is?

MORTENSGÅRD. Cannot you guess yourself, Pastor?

ROSMER. No, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

MORTENSGÅRD. Well well, I suppose I must come out with it then. I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

MORTENSGÅRD. No, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

ROSMER. Also from Miss West?

MORTENSGÅRD. No, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER. Well then, from whom? from whom?

MORTENSGÅRD. From the late Mrs. Rosmer.

ROSMER. From my wife! *You* received a letter from my wife!

MORTENSGÅRD. I did.

ROSMER. When?

MORTENSGÅRD. It was towards the close of Mrs. Rosmer's life. Perhaps about eighteen months ago. That's the letter I call strange.

ROSMER. I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes; I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

ROSMER. And what in all the world did my unhappy wife write to *you* about?

MORTENSGÅRD. I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear; for there are so many malicious people about here, she says; and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

ROSMER. Me?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

ROSMER. Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

MORTENSGÅRD. The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that got me dismissed from my post as teacher; and she conjures me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

ROSMER. How did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

MORTENSGÅRD. The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them; they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

ROSMER. Is all that in the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD. You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

ROSMER. But I don't understand——? What did she imagine the rumours to be about?

MORTENSGÅRD. Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his childhood. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—hm——

ROSMER. Next?

MORTENSGÅRD. Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any rumours to that effect should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the *Beacon*.

ROSMER. Is no name mentioned?

MORTENSGÅRD. None.

ROSMER. Who brought you the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD. I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

ROSMER. If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learned that my poor unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

MORTENSGÅRD. I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer. But I must say that was not the impression I received.

ROSMER. Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

MORTENSGÅRD. To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. In my life, do you mean?

MORTENSGÅRD. Yes. You must remember that henceforth you are not above suspicion.

ROSMER. Then you've quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

MORTENSGÅRD. I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible. But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future. If anything should get

abroad that runs counter to current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it. Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER. Good-bye.

MORTENSGÅRD. Then I'll go straight to the office and have the great piece of news put into the *Beacon*.

ROSMER. Yes; everything.

MORTENSGÅRD. I'll put in everything that the public need know.

(*He bows and goes out.* ROSMER *remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs. The outer door is heard to close.*)

ROSMER (*in the doorway, calls softly*). Rebecca! Re—— Hm. (*Aloud.*) Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

MADAM HELSETH (*from the hall*). No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here.

(*The curtain in the back is drawn aside.* REBECCA *appears in the doorway.*)

REBECCA. Rosmer!

ROSMER (*turns*). What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

REBECCA (*goes up to him*). I was listening.

ROSMER. Oh Rebecca, how could you?

REBECCA. I had to. He said it so malignantly—that about my morning wrapper——

ROSMER. Then you were there when Kroll——?

REBECCA. Yes. I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind.

ROSMER. I would have told you.

REBECCA. You would scarcely have told me all. And certainly not in his own words.

ROSMER. Did you hear everything, then?

REBECCA. Nearly everything, I think. I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgård came.

ROSMER. And then you came back again——?

REBECCA. Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

ROSMER. Do whatever you think right and proper. You are mistress of your own actions.—But what do you say to this, Rebecca?—Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

REBECCA. Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen sometime.

ROSMER. No—no—not for this.

REBECCA. Not for this?

ROSMER. I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and bespattered. Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes. Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed. It was a dangerous secret.

REBECCA. Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our own hearts that we are blameless.

ROSMER. I? Blameless? Yes, I thought so—till to-day. But now—now, Rebecca——?

REBECCA. Well, what now?

ROSMER. How am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

REBECCA (*vehemently*). Oh don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just

beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave.

ROSMER. Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again.

REBECCA. Oh no—not that, Rosmer; not that!

ROSMER. Yes, I tell you. We must try to get to the bottom of this. How can she have fallen into such a miserable misunderstanding?

REBECCA. You're surely not beginning to doubt that she was practically insane?

ROSMER. Oh yes—that's just what I can't be so sure of any longer. And besides—even if she was——

REBECCA. If she was? Well, what then?

ROSMER. I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the border-line of madness?

REBECCA. Oh, why brood over such insoluble problems?

ROSMER. I cannot help it, Rebecca. I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

REBECCA. But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject.

ROSMER (*walks about restlessly, in thought*). I must have betrayed myself somehow or other. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time you came to us.

REBECCA. Yes but, dear, even if she did——?

ROSMER. Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing

all the new ideas drew us together. But I can't understand it! I was so careful to spare her. When I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests. Did I not, Rebecca?

REBECCA. Yes, yes; certainly you did.

ROSMER. And you too. And yet——! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything.

REBECCA (*pressing her hands together*). Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

ROSMER. To think of all she must have suffered in silence! All the foulness her sick brain must have conjured up around us! Did she never say anything to you to put you on the alert?

REBECCA (*as if startled*). To me! Do you think I should have stayed a day longer if she had?

ROSMER. No, no, of course not.—Oh, what a fight she must have fought. And alone too, Rebecca; desperate and quite alone!—And then, at last, that heart-breaking, accusing victory—in the mill-race.

(*Throws himself into the chair by the writing-table, with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands.*)

REBECCA (*approaches him cautiously from behind*). Listen, Rosmer. If it were in your power to call Beata back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

ROSMER. Oh, how do I know what I would or

would not do! I can think of nothing but this one thing—that cannot be recalled.

REBECCA. You were just beginning to live, Rosmer. You *had* begun. You had freed yourself—on every side. You felt so buoyant and happy——

ROSMER. Oh yes—I did indeed.—And now this crushing blow falls on me.

REBECCA (*behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back*). How pleasant it was when we sat in the twilight in the room downstairs, and helped each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of to-day, as you said. You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home; to win over minds and wills; to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles. Noble-men.

ROSMER. Joyful noble-men.

REBECCA. Yes—joyful.

ROSMER. For it is joy that ennobles the mind, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Should you not say—sorrow too? A great sorrow?

ROSMER. Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it.

REBECCA. That is what you must do.

ROSMER (*shakes his head heavily*). I shall never get over this—wholly. There will always be a doubt—a question left. I can never again revel in that which makes life so marvellously sweet to live!

REBECCA (*bends over his chair-back, and says more softly:*) What is it you mean, Rosmer?

ROSMER (*looking up at her*). Peaceful, happy innocence.

REBECCA (*takes a step back*). Yes. Innocence.

ROSMER (*with his elbow on the table, supporting his head, looks straight before him*). And what powers of reasoning she showed! How systematically she put all this together! First she begins to doubt my orthodoxy—— How could that occur to her? But it did occur to her; and then it grew to be a certainty. And then—yes, then of course it was easy for her to think all the rest possible. (*Sits up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair.*) Oh, all these horrible fancies! I shall never get rid of them. I feel it. I know it. At any moment they will come rushing in upon me, and bring back the thought of the dead!

REBECCA. Like the white horse of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Yes, like that. Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence.

REBECCA. And because of this miserable figment of your brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

ROSMER. You may well think it hard. Yes, hard, Rebecca. But no choice is left me. How could I ever leave this behind me?

REBECCA (*behind his chair*). By entering into new relations.

ROSMER (*surprised, looks up*). New relations?

REBECCA. Yes, new relations to the outside world. Live, work, act. Don't sit here and brood and grope among insoluble enigmas.

ROSMER (*rises*). New relations? (*Walks across the floor, stops at the door, and then comes back.*) One question occurs to me. Has it not occurred to you too, Rebecca?

REBECCA (*breathes with effort*). Let me—hear—what it is?

ROSMER. What form do you think *our* relations will take after to-day?

REBECCA. I believe our friendship will endure—whatever may happen.

ROSMER. That is not exactly what I meant. The thing that first brought us together, and that unites us so closely—our common faith in a pure comradeship between man and woman——

REBECCA. Yes, yes—what of that?

ROSMER. I mean, that such a relation—as this of ours—does it not presuppose a quiet, happy, peaceful life——?

REBECCA. What then?

ROSMER. But the life I must now look forward to is one of struggle and unrest and strong agitations. For I *will* live my life, Rebecca! I will not be crushed to earth by horrible possibilities. I will not have my course of life prescribed for me, either by the living or by—any one else.

REBECCA. No, no—do not! Be a free man to the full, Rosmer!

ROSMER. But do you know what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

REBECCA. How?

ROSMER. By opposing to it a new, a living reality.

REBECCA (*catches at the chair-back*). A living——? What do you mean?

ROSMER (*comes nearer*). Rebecca, if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

REBECCA (*for a moment speechless, then cries out with joy*). Your wife? Your——? I?

ROSMER. Come; let us try it. We two will be one. The place of the dead must stand empty no longer.

REBECCA. I—in Beata's place——!

ROSMER. Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.

REBECCA (*softly, trembling*). Do you think so, Rosmer?

ROSMER. It must be so! It *must!* I cannot—I will not go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to cast it off, Rebecca. And let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion. You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had.

REBECCA (*with self-command*). Never speak of this again. I will never be your wife.

ROSMER. What! Never! Do you not think you could come to love me? Is there not already a strain of love in our friendship?

REBECCA (*puts her hands over her ears as if in terror*). Don't speak so, Rosmer! Don't say such things!

ROSMER (*seizes her arm*). Yes, yes—there is a growing possibility in our relation. Oh, I can see that you feel it too. Do you not, Rebecca?

REBECCA (*once more firm and calm*). Listen to me. I tell you—if you persist in this, I will go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Go away! You! You cannot. It is impossible.

REBECCA. It is still more impossible that I should be your wife. Never in this world can I marry you.

ROSMER (*looks at her in surprise*). You say "can"; and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

REBECCA (*seizes both his hands*). Dear friend—both for your own sake and for mine—do not ask why. (*Lets go his hands.*) Do not, Rosmer. (*Goes towards the door on the left.*)

ROSMER. Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

REBECCA (*turns and looks at him*). Then it is all over.

ROSMER. Between you and me?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER. It will never be all over between us two. You will never leave Rosmersholm.

REBECCA (*with her hand on the door handle*). No, perhaps I shall not. But all the same, if you ask me again—it is all over.

ROSMER. All over? How——?

REBECCA. For then I will go the way that Beata went. Now you know it, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Rebecca!

REBECCA (*in the doorway, nods slowly*). Now you know it. (*She goes out.*)

ROSMER (*stares, thunderstruck, at the door, and says to himself*). What—is—this?

Act Third.

(*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the entrance door are open. The sun is shining outside. Forenoon.*)

(REBECCA WEST, *dressed as in the first Act, stands at the window, watering and arranging the flowers. Her crochet-work lies in the arm-chair.* MADAM HELSETH *is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush.*)

REBECCA (*after a short silence*). I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh he often does that. But he'll soon be down now, I should think.

REBECCA. Have you seen anything of him?

MADAM HELSETH. I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee. He was in his bedroom, dressing.

REBECCA. I ask because he was a little out of sorts yesterday.

MADAM HELSETH. He didn't look well. I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

REBECCA. What do you think it can be?

MADAM HELSETH. I couldn't say. Perhaps it may be that Mortensgård that's set them against each other.

REBECCA. Likely enough.—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH. No indeed. How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him?

REBECCA. Do you mean because he edits such a low paper?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh it's not only *that*.—You must have heard, Miss, that he had a child by a married woman that had been deserted by her husband?

REBECCA. Yes, I have heard of it. But it must have been long before I came here.

MADAM HELSETH. It's true he was very young at the time; and she should have known better. He wanted to marry her too; but of course he couldn't do that. And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it.—But, good Lord, Mortensgård has got on in the world since then. Lots of people run after him now.

REBECCA. Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble.

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, and others too, perhaps, besides the poor folk——

REBECCA (*looks at her furtively*). Indeed?

MADAM HELSETH (*by the sofa, dusting away vigorously*). Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss.

REBECCA. Come now, that's only a notion of yours, Madam Helseth. You can't *know* anything for certain.

MADAM HELSETH. You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I do. Why—if you *must* know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgård myself.

REBECCA (*turning*). No—did you?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, indeed I did. And a letter that was written at Rosmersholm too.

REBECCA. Really, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, that it was. And it was on fine paper, and there was fine red sealing-wax outside it too.

REBECCA. And it was given to *you* to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it.

MADAM HELSETH. Well?

REBECCA. It must have been something that poor Mrs. Rosmer, in her morbid state——

MADAM HELSETH. It's you that say it, Miss, not I.

REBECCA. But what was in the letter? Oh, I forgot, *you* can't know that.

MADAM HELSETH. Hm; what if I did know it all the same?

REBECCA. Did she tell you what she was writing about?

MADAM HELSETH. No, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgård, when he'd read it, he began questioning me up and down and backwards and forwards, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

REBECCA. Then what do you think was in it? Oh my dear good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh no, Miss. Not for the whole world.

REBECCA. Oh you can surely tell *me*. We two are such good friends.

MADAM HELSETH. Lord preserve me from telling

you anything about *that*, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

REBECCA. Who had got her to believe it?

MADAM HELSETH. Wicked people, Miss West. Wicked people.

REBECCA. Wicked——?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

REBECCA. And who do you think it could have been?

MADAM HELSETH. Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid *I* should say anything. There's a certain lady in the town to be sure—hm!

REBECCA. I can see that you mean Mrs. Kroll.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, she's a fine one, she is. She's always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you either.

REBECCA. Do you think Mrs. Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH. It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

REBECCA. But she seemed to go distracted when she came to know that she never could have any children. It was then that the madness broke out.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, poor lady, *that* was a dreadful blow to her.

REBECCA (*takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window*). But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. What, Miss?

REBECCA. That there were no children. Don't you think so?

MADAM HELSETH. Hm, I'm sure I don't know what to say about that.

REBECCA. Oh yes, believe me, it was best for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

MADAM HELSETH. Children don't cry at Rosmersholm, Miss.

REBECCA (*looks at her*). Don't cry?

MADAM HELSETH. No. As long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

REBECCA. That's a strange thing.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes; isn't it? It runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

REBECCA. That's most extraordinary——

MADAM HELSETH. Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

REBECCA. No; now that I think of it, I almost believe you're right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

MADAM HELSETH. No, they don't. They say it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

REBECCA. You're a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Oh Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. (*Listens.*) Hush, hush—

here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

(*She goes out to the right.*)

(JOHANNES ROSMER, *with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall.*)

ROSMER. Good morning, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Good morning, dear. (*A moment after—crocheting.*) Are you going out?

ROSMER. Yes.

REBECCA. It's a beautiful day.

ROSMER. You didn't look in on me this morning.

REBECCA. No, I didn't. Not to-day.

ROSMER. Do you intend to in future?

REBECCA. Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

ROSMER. Has anything come for me?

REBECCA. The *County News* has come.

ROSMER. The *County News?*

REBECCA. There it is on the table.

ROSMER (*puts down his hat and stick*). Is there anything——?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER. And you didn't send it up?

REBECCA. You will read it soon enough.

ROSMER. Oh, indeed? (*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table.*)—What!—"We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades." (*Looks at her.*) They call me a renegade, Rebecca.

REBECCA. They mention no names.

ROSMER. That makes no difference. (*Reads on.*) "Secret traitors to the good cause"—"Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their

apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived." "Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations" —"in the confident hope of a suitable reward from those who are in momentary authority." (*Lays down the paper on the table.*) And they write such things about me!—Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe. Things they know there is not a word of truth in—they print them all the same.

REBECCA. That's not all.

ROSMER (*takes up the paper again*). "Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse"—"pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation." (*Looks at her.*) What is this?

REBECCA. It's intended for me, you understand.

ROSMER (*lays down the paper*). Rebecca,—this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

REBECCA. Yes, I don't think they need talk about Mortensgård.

ROSMER (*walks about the room*). Something *must* be done. All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on. But it shall not go on! Oh, what a joy—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness.

REBECCA (*rises*). Ah yes, Rosmer. In that you have a great and glorious object to live for.

ROSMER. Only think, if I could awaken them to self-knowledge; teach them to repent and blush

before their better selves; bring them together in mutual tolerance, in love, Rebecca!

REBECCA. Yes, only centre all your powers on that, and you'll see you will win.

ROSMER. I think success must be possible. Oh, what a delight it would then be to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling; only emulation. All eyes fixed on the same goal. Every will, every mind pressing forward—upward—each by its own naturally predestined path. Happiness for all—through all. (*Happens to look out of the window, starts, and says sadly.*) Ah! Not through me.

REBECCA. Not——? Not through you?

ROSMER. Nor *for* me.

REBECCA. Oh Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you.

ROSMER. Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the peaceful, joyful, secure consciousness of innocence.

REBECCA (*looks straight before her*). Yes, innocence——

ROSMER. Oh, *you* don't know what guilt means. But I——

REBECCA. You least of all!

ROSMER (*points out of the window*). The mill-race.

REBECCA. Oh Rosmer——!

(MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door.*)

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West!

REBECCA. Presently, presently. Not now.

MADAM HELSETH. Only a word, Miss.

(REBECCA *goes to the door.* MADAM HELSETH

tells her something. They whisper together. MADAM HELSETH *nods and goes out.*)

ROSMER (*uneasily*). Was it anything for me?

REBECCA. No, only something about the housework.—You should go out into the fresh air, dear Rosmer. You should take a good long walk.

ROSMER (*takes up his hat*). Yes, come. We'll go together.

REBECCA. No, dear, I can't just now. You must go alone. But shake off all these gloomy thoughts. Promise me.

ROSMER. I shall never shake them off, I fear.

REBECCA. Oh that such baseless fancies should take such a hold of you——!

ROSMER. Not so baseless I'm afraid, Rebecca. I lay awake all night thinking it over and over. Perhaps Beata was right after all.

REBECCA. In what?

ROSMER. In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Right in *that!*

ROSMER (*lays his hat down on the table*). The question that haunts me is this: were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

REBECCA. You mean that it might as well have been called——?

ROSMER. ——love. Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean. Even during Beata's life, all my thoughts were for you. It was you alone I longed for. It was beside you that I felt the peaceful blessedness of utter content. If you think it over, Rebecca, did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet

secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me.

REBECCA (*struggling with herself*). Oh—I don't know what to answer.

ROSMER. And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship. No, Rebecca—our bond has been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata.

REBECCA. No right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER. She looked at our relation with the eyes of *her* love—judged it from *her* love's standpoint. Inevitably. Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did.

REBECCA. But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

ROSMER. It was love for me—*her* kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race. That is an immovable fact, Rebecca. And that is what I can never get over.

REBECCA. Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to.

ROSMER (*shakes his head*). It can never be accomplished, dear. Not by me. Not after what I have come to know.

REBECCA. Why not by you?

ROSMER. Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin.

REBECCA (*breaking out*). Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples.

They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that there is something in it.

ROSMER. Be that as it may; what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I say. The cause that is to win a lasting victory must be borne forward by a joyous, an innocent man.

REBECCA. Is joy so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Joy? Yes, dear,—it is.

REBECCA. To you, who can never laugh?

ROSMER. Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness.

REBECCA. Now go for your walk, dear. A good long walk. Do you hear?—See, here is your hat. And your stick too.

ROSMER (*takes both*). Thanks. And you won't come with me?

REBECCA. No, no; I can't just now.

ROSMER. Oh well, you are with me none the less.

(*He goes out by the entrance-door.* REBECCA *waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door; then she goes to the door on the right.*)

REBECCA (*opens the door, and says in a low tone*). Now, Madam Helseth. You can show him in now.

(*Goes towards the window. A moment after,* RECTOR KROLL *enters from the right. He bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand.*)

KROLL. He has gone out?

REBECCA. Yes.

KROLL. Does he usually stay out long?

REBECCA. Yes, he does. But one can't count on him to-day. So if you don't want to meet him——

KROLL. No, no. It is you I wish to speak to,—quite alone.

REBECCA. Then we'd better not lose time. Sit down, Rector.

(*She sits in the easy-chair by the window.* RECTOR KROLL *sits on a chair beside her.*)

KROLL. Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart —this change in Johannes Rosmer.

REBECCA. We expected it would be so—at first.

KROLL. Only at first?

REBECCA. Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him.

KROLL. I?

REBECCA. Both you and all his other friends.

KROLL. Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life.

REBECCA. But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides——

KROLL. Yes, but wait—that is just what I don't believe.

REBECCA. What *do* you believe then?

KROLL. I believe that *you* are at the bottom of it all.

REBECCA. That is your wife's suggestion, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. It doesn't matter whose suggestion it is. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an

exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over, and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here.

REBECCA (*looks at him*). I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong *faith* in me, dear Rector. I might almost say a *warm* faith.

KROLL (*in a subdued voice*). Whom could you not bewitch—if you tried?

REBECCA. Did I try——?

KROLL. Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to gain access to Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it.

REBECCA. Have you completely forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

KROLL. Yes, when you had bewitched her too. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion.—Yes, that is the right word for it.

REBECCA. Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical.

KROLL. No; that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you wish to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences — just because your heart is cold.

REBECCA. Cold? Are you so sure of that?

KROLL. I'm quite certain of it now. Otherwise

you could never have lived here year after year without faltering in your pursuit of your object. Well well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to accomplish all this, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

REBECCA. That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

KROLL. I?

REBECCA. Yes, when you persuaded him that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end.

KROLL. Does he feel that so deeply?

REBECCA. How can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his——

KROLL. I thought that an emancipated man, so called, was above all such scruples.—But there we have it! Oh yes—I admit I foresaw it. The descendant of the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation?

REBECCA (*looks down thoughtfully*). Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain.

KROLL. Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his.

REBECCA. What antecedents do you mean?

KROLL. I mean your hereditary—your family antecedents, Miss West.

REBECCA. Oh, those! Yes, it's quite true that I come of very humble folk. But all the same——

KROLL. I'm not talking about rank and position. I was thinking of moral antecedents.

REBECCA. Moral——? In what sense?

KROLL. The circumstances of your birth.

REBECCA. What do you mean?

KROLL. I only mention it because it explains your whole conduct.

REBECCA. I do not understand this. I demand a full explanation!

KROLL. I really didn't suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr. West adopt you——

REBECCA (*rises*). Ah! Now I understand.

KROLL. ——and that you took his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

REBECCA (*walks across the room*). My father's name was Gamvik, Rector.

KROLL. Your mother's business must have brought her into continual contact with the parish doctor.

REBECCA. Yes, it did.

KROLL. And then he takes you to live with him —as soon as your mother dies. He treats you harshly; and yet you stay with him. You know that he won't leave you a halfpenny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case-full of books—and yet you stay on; you bear with him; you nurse him to the last.

REBECCA (*stands by the table; looks scornfully at*

him). And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

KROLL. I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct. Indeed, I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin.

REBECCA (*vehemently*). But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West had not come to Finmark at the time I was born.

KROLL. Excuse me, Miss West. He settled there the year before. I have assured myself of that.

REBECCA. You are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken!

KROLL. You told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year.

REBECCA. Indeed! Did I say so?

KROLL. Yes, you did. And I can calculate from that——

REBECCA. Stop! You needn't calculate. I may as well tell you at once: I am a year older than I give myself out to be.

KROLL (*smiles incredulously*). Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

REBECCA. When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman. And so I began to lie about my age.

KROLL. You? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

REBECCA. Yes, it was idiotic of me—and ludicrous too. But some folly or other will always cling to us, not to be shaken off. We are made so.

KROLL. Well, so be it; but the calculation is right, all the same. For Dr. West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment.

REBECCA (*breaks out*). It is not true!

KROLL. Is it not true?

REBECCA. No. For my mother never said anything about it.

KROLL. Did she not?

REBECCA. No, never. Nor Dr. West either; not a word about it!

KROLL. Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West. Perhaps it is a family foible.

REBECCA (*walks about clenching and wringing her hands*). It is impossible. You only want to get me to imagine it. This can never, never be true! It cannot! Never in this world!

KROLL (*rises*). My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe——?

REBECCA. Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing.

KROLL. Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart.

REBECCA (*controls herself*). It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll. I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child.

KROLL. Indeed! Well well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime. But in

that case you must still have a certain prejudice on that point too?

REBECCA. Yes, I suppose I have.

KROLL. Ah, I fancy it's much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation." You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions. You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that appear to overturn certain principles that have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable. But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—only knowledge. It has not passed into your blood.

REBECCA (*thoughtfully*). Perhaps you are right.

KROLL. Yes, probe your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with you, it is easy to see how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is simple, sheer madness—it's running blindfold to destruction—for him to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine him cast off—persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he can never be the man to endure all that.

REBECCA. He *must* endure it! It is too late now for him to retreat.

KROLL. Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

REBECCA. And what is that?

KROLL. You must get him to legalise the position, Miss West.

REBECCA. The position he stands in towards me?

KROLL. Yes, you must make him do that.

REBECCA. Then you absolutely cannot get rid of the idea that our position requires to be—legalised, as you call it?

KROLL. I would rather not go into the matter too closely. But I believe I have noticed, that it is nowhere easier to break through all so-called prejudices than in—hm——

REBECCA. In the relation between man and woman, you mean?

KROLL. Yes,—to speak plainly—I think so.

REBECCA (*wanders across the room and looks out at the window*). I could almost say—I wish you were right, Rector Kroll.

KROLL. What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely.

REBECCA. Oh well—don't let us talk any more about these things. Ah,—there he comes.

KROLL. Already? Then I will go.

REBECCA (*goes towards him*). No—please stay. There's something I want you to hear.

KROLL. Not now. I don't think I can bear to see him.

REBECCA. I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will repent it afterwards. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

KROLL (*looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat*). Well, Miss West—so be it, then.

(*A short silence. Then* JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*)

ROSMER (*sees the* RECTOR, *and stops in the doorway*). What!—Are *you* here?

REBECCA. He did not wish to meet you,[1] Rosmer.

KROLL (*involuntarily*). "*Du!*"

REBECCA. Yes, Rector Kroll, Rosmer and I—we say "*du*" to each other. The relation between us has led to that.

KROLL. Was that what you wanted me to hear?

REBECCA. That—and something more.

ROSMER (*comes forward*). What is the object of this visit?

KROLL. I wanted to try once more to stop you and win you back again.

ROSMER (*points to the newspaper*). After what is in that paper?

KROLL. I did not write it.

ROSMER. Did you do anything to prevent its publication?

KROLL. That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And besides, it was not in my power.

REBECCA (*tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove*). There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

KROLL. Ah, if you could only bring *that* about.

REBECCA. Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell the whole story.

[1] Rebecca addresses Rosmer as "*du*" for the first time in Kroll's presence.

ROSMER (*seats himself mechanically*). What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

REBECCA. The calmness of resolution. (*Seats herself.*) Pray sit down too, Rector.

(RECTOR KROLL *seats himself on the sofa.*)

ROSMER. The calmness of resolution, you say? What resolution?

REBECCA. I will restore to you what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

ROSMER. What is all this?

REBECCA. I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

ROSMER. Well!

REBECCA. When I came down here from Finmark —along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was opening up before me. The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I had in those days. (*With a struggle, and in a voice scarcely audible.*) And then——

KROLL. And then?

ROSMER. But Rebecca—I know all this.

REBECCA (*mastering herself*). Yes, yes—you are right. You know enough about this.

KROLL (*looks hard at her*). Perhaps I had better go.

REBECCA. No, please remain where you are, my dear Rector. (*To* ROSMER.) Well, you see, this was it—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning, with all its new ideas.—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had a

great influence over you while you were still a boy. I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work.

ROSMER. You came here with a secret design——?

REBECCA. We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side. Ever onward! Ever further and further to the front.—But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier.

ROSMER. What barrier do you mean?

REBECCA. I mean this, Rosmer: You could grow into freedom only in the fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage.

ROSMER. You have never before spoken to me of my marriage in *that* tone.

REBECCA. No, I didn't dare to, for I should have frightened you.

KROLL (*nods to* ROSMER). Do you hear that?

REBECCA (*goes on*). But I soon understood where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance. And then I acted.

ROSMER. Acted? In what way?

KROLL. Do you mean that——!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer. (*Rises.*) Sit still. You too, Rector Kroll. But now it must out. It was not you, Rosmer. You are innocent. It was *I* that lured —that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion——

ROSMER (*springs up*). Rebecca!

KROLL (*rises from the sofa*). The paths of delusion!

REBECCA. The paths—that led to the mill-race. Now you know it, both of you.

ROSMER (*as if stunned*). But I don't understand. What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word——!

KROLL. Oh yes, Rosmer—I am beginning to understand.

ROSMER. But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

REBECCA. She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices.

ROSMER. Yes, but that was not the case at that time.

REBECCA. I knew that it soon would be.

KROLL (*nods to* ROSMER). Aha!

ROSMER. And then? What more? I must know all now.

REBECCA. Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Why did you wish to go—then?

REBECCA. I did not wish to go; I wished to stay here, where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time. I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen.

ROSMER. Then this is what you said and did!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer.

ROSMER. This is what you call "acting."

REBECCA (*in a broken voice*). I called it so, yes.

ROSMER (*after a pause*). Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

REBECCA. Yes.

KROLL. Not all.

REBECCA (*looks at him in fear*). What more should there be?

KROLL. Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible?—Well?

REBECCA (*low and indistinctly*). Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

ROSMER (*sinks into the arm-chair by the window*). And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! (*Looks up at* REBECCA.) And she never turned to me. Never spoke a word! Oh, Rebecca, —I can see it in your face—you dissuaded her from it!

REBECCA. She had got it into her head that she, as a childless wife, had no right to be here. And then she imagined that it was her duty to you to efface herself.

ROSMER. And you—you did nothing to disabuse her of the idea?

REBECCA. No.

KROLL. Perhaps you confirmed her in it? Answer! Did you not?

REBECCA. I believe she may have understood me so.

ROSMER. Yes, yes—and in everything she bowed before your will. And she did efface herself! (*Springs up.*) How could—how could you play this ghastly game?

REBECCA. It seemed to me I had to choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

KROLL (*severely and impressively*). *You* had no right to make such a choice!

REBECCA (*vehemently*). You think then that I was cool and calculating and self-possessed all the time! I was not then the same woman I am now, as I stand here relating it all. And then there are two sorts of will in us, I believe! I wanted Beata away, by one means or another; but all the same I never believed that it would come to pass. As I felt my way forward, at each step I ventured, I seemed to hear something cry out within me: No further! Not a step further!—And yet I *could* not stop. I *had* to venture the least little bit further. Only one hairsbreadth more. And then one more—and always one more—and then it happened.—That is the way such things come about.

(*A short silence.*)

ROSMER (*to* REBECCA). What do you think will become of you now? After this?

REBECCA. Things must go with me as they will. It doesn't matter much.

KROLL. Not a word of remorse! Is it possible you feel none?

REBECCA (*coldly putting aside his question*). Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter that concerns no one but me. I must settle that with myself.

KROLL (*to* ROSMER). And this is the woman you are living under the same roof with—in the closest intimacy! (*Looks round at the pictures.*) Oh if those that are gone could see us now!

ROSMER. Are you going back to town?

KROLL (*takes up his hat*). Yes. The sooner the better.

ROSMER (*does the same*). Then I will go with you.

KROLL. Will you! Ah yes, I was sure we hadn't lost you for good.

ROSMER. Come then, Kroll! Come!

(*Both go out through the hall without looking at* REBECCA.)

(*After a moment*, REBECCA *goes cautiously to the window and looks out through the flowers.*)

REBECCA (*speaks to herself under her breath*). Not over the foot-bridge to-day either. He goes round. Never across the mill-race. Never. (*Leaves the window.*) Well, well! (*Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a moment after*, MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*)

MADAM HELSETH. What is it, Miss?

REBECCA. Madam Helseth, would you be so good as to have my trunk fetched down from the loft.

MADAM HELSETH. Your trunk?

REBECCA. Yes, you know—the brown sealskin trunk.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, yes. But, Lord preserve us—are you going on a journey, Miss?

REBECCA. Yes—now I'm going on a journey, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. And immediately!

REBECCA. As soon as I have packed up.

MADAM HELSETH. Well, I've never heard the like of that! But you'll come back again soon, Miss, of course?

REBECCA. I shall never come back again.

MADAM HELSETH. Never! But, dear Lord, what will things be like at Rosmersholm when you're gone, Miss? And the poor Pastor was just beginning to be so happy and comfortable.

REBECCA. Yes, but I've taken fright to-day, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Taken fright! Dear dear! how was that?

REBECCA. I think I saw something like a glimpse of white horses.

MADAM HELSETH. White horses! In broad daylight!

REBECCA. Oh, they're out early and late—the white horses of Rosmersholm. (*With a change of tone.*) Well,—about the trunk, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, yes. The trunk.

(*Both go out to the right.*)

Act Fourth.

(*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. Late evening. A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table.* REBECCA WEST *stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag. Her cloak, hat, and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa.*)

(MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*)

MADAM HELSETH (*speaks in a low voice and appears reserved*). All your things have been taken down, Miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

REBECCA. Very well. You have ordered the carriage?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes. The coachman wants to know what time he should be here.

REBECCA. About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight.

MADAM HELSETH (*hesitates a little*). But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

REBECCA. I shall go all the same. If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter. Tell him so.

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, writing—that may be all very well. But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more.

REBECCA. Perhaps so. And yet—perhaps not.

MADAM HELSETH. Well—that I should live to see this. I never thought of such a thing!

REBECCA. What did you think then, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH. Well, I certainly thought Pastor Rosmer was a solider man than this.

REBECCA. Solider?

MADAM HELSETH. Yes, that's what *I* say.

REBECCA. Why, my dear Madam Helseth, what do you mean?

MADAM HELSETH. I mean what's right and true, Miss. He shouldn't get out of it in this way, that he shouldn't.

REBECCA (*looks at her*). Come, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly: why do you think I am going away?

MADAM HELSETH. Ah, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it's necessary, Miss. Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think it's nice of the Pastor. Mortensgård had some excuse; for her husband was alive, so that they couldn't marry, however much they wanted to. But as for the Pastor, he—hm!

REBECCA (*with a faint smile*). Could you have believed such a thing of me and Pastor Rosmer?

MADAM HELSETH. No, never in this world. At least, I mean—not until to-day.

REBECCA. But to-day then?

MADAM HELSETH. Well,—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor——

REBECCA. Aha!

MADAM HELSETH. For it's my belief that the

man that can go over to Mortensgård's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him.

REBECCA. Oh yes, I suppose so. But what about me? What do you say about me?

MADAM HELSETH. Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against you. It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain. We're all of us human, Miss West.

REBECCA. That's very true, Madam Helseth. We're all of us human.—What are you listening for?

MADAM HELSETH (*in a low voice*). Oh Lord,—if I don't believe that's him coming.

REBECCA (*starts*). After all then——! (*Resolutely.*) Well well; so be it.

(JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*)

ROSMER (*sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to* REBECCA, *and asks*). What is the meaning of this?

REBECCA. I am going.

ROSMER. At once?

REBECCA. Yes. (*To* MADAM HELSETH.) Eleven o'clock then.

MADAM HELSETH. Very well, Miss. (*Goes out to the right.*)

ROSMER (*after a short pause*). Where are you going to, Rebecca?

REBECCA. North, by the steamer.

ROSMER. North? What takes you to the North?

REBECCA. It was there I came from.

ROSMER. But you have no ties there now.

REBECCA. I have none here either.

ROSMER. What do you think of doing?

REBECCA. I don't know. I only want to have done with it all.

ROSMER. To have done with it?

REBECCA. Rosmersholm has broken me.

ROSMER (*his attention aroused*). Do you say so?

REBECCA. Broken me utterly and hopelessly. I had a fresh, undaunted will when I came here. Now I have bent my neck under a strange law. From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

ROSMER. Why not? What law is it that you say you have——?

REBECCA. Dear, don't let us talk of *that*, just now.—What happened between you and the Rector?

ROSMER. We have made peace.

REBECCA. Ah yes. Then that was the end.

ROSMER. He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me. —And besides, it's so hopeless in itself, Rebecca. I shall let it alone.

REBECCA. Yes, yes—perhaps it's best so.

ROSMER. Is *that* what you say now? Do you think so *now?*

REBECCA. I have come to think so—in the last few days.

ROSMER. You are lying, Rebecca.

REBECCA. Lying——!

ROSMER. Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

REBECCA. I believed that we two together could do it.

ROSMER. That is not true. You thought that you yourself could achieve something great in life; and that you could use me to further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—*that* is what you thought.

REBECCA. Listen to me, Rosmer——

ROSMER (*seats himself listlessly on the sofa*). Oh, what is the use? I see to the bottom of it now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

REBECCA. Listen, Rosmer. Let us talk this thing out. It will be the last time. (*Sits in a chair close to the sofa.*) I intended to write you all about it—when I got up North again. But I daresay it's best that you should hear it at once.

ROSMER. Have you more confessions to make?

REBECCA. The greatest of all is to come.

ROSMER. The greatest?

REBECCA. What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

ROSMER (*shakes his head*). I don't understand a word of this.

REBECCA. It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I was certain to make my fortune here. One way or the other—you understand.

ROSMER. Well, you succeeded in accomplishing your ends.

REBECCA. I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my undaunted, free-born will. I knew no

scruples—I stood in awe of no human relation.—But then began what has broken down my will, and cowed me so pitiably for my whole life.

ROSMER. What began? Speak so that I can understand you.

REBECCA. It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable desire—oh, Rosmer——!

ROSMER. Desire? You——! For what?

REBECCA. For you.

ROSMER (*tries to spring up*). What is this?

REBECCA (*stops him*). Sit still, dear; there is more to tell.

ROSMER. And you mean to say—that you love me—in that way?

REBECCA. I thought then that it should be called love. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable desire.

ROSMER (*with difficulty*). Rebecca, is it really about you—about yourself—that you are telling me all this?

REBECCA. Yes, what do you think, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Then it was because of this—under the influence of this—that you—that you *acted*, as you call it?

REBECCA. It came upon me like a storm on the sea. It was like one of the storms we sometimes have in the North in the winter time. It seizes you—and sweeps you along with it—whither it will. Resistance is out of the question.

ROSMER. And so it swept the unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

REBECCA. Yes, it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

ROSMER. Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

REBECCA. I knew you so well that I was sure—sure I could never reach you until you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in mind.

ROSMER. But I don't understand you, Rebecca. You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in mind and in circumstances. You have reached the very goal you proposed to yourself from the first. And yet——

REBECCA. I have never stood further from my goal than now.

ROSMER. And yet, I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be.

REBECCA. I cried out in despair, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Why?

REBECCA. Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. My old undaunted will has had its wings clipped here. It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world. I have lost the power of action, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Tell me how this has come about.

REBECCA. It has come about through my life with you.

ROSMER. But how? How?

REBECCA. When I was left alone with you here,—and when you had become yourself again——

ROSMER. Yes, yes?

REBECCA. ——for you were never quite yourself so long as Beata lived——

ROSMER. I'm afraid you are right there.

REBECCA. But when I came to live alone with you here,—in quiet—in solitude,—when you showed me all your thoughts without reserve—every sweet and delicate mood—just as it came to you—*then* the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the bottom of my soul.

ROSMER. Oh, what is this, Rebecca?

REBECCA. All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence. Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun.

ROSMER. Tell me more of this. Tell me all you can.

REBECCA. There is not much more, dear. Only this—it was love that was born in me. The great self-denying love, that is content with life, as we two have lived it together.

ROSMER. Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

REBECCA. It is best as it is. Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy——

ROSMER. Yes, did you not, Rebecca! I thought that was the meaning of your cry.

REBECCA. For a moment, yes. I had forgotten

myself. It was my old buoyant will that was struggling to be free. But it has no energy left now —no power of endurance.

ROSMER. How do you explain what has happened to you?

REBECCA. It is the Rosmer view of life—or *your* view of life, at any rate—that has infected my will.

ROSMER. Infected?

REBECCA. And made it sick. Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before. You—life with you—has ennobled my mind——

ROSMER. Oh that I could believe it!

REBECCA. You may safely believe it! The Rosmer view of life ennobles. But—— (*shaking her head*). But—— but——

ROSMER. But——? well?

REBECCA. ——but it kills happiness.

ROSMER. Do you think so, Rebecca?

REBECCA. My happiness, at any rate.

ROSMER. Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now——? If I were to beg and entreat you——?

REBECCA. Dear,—never speak of this again! It is impossible!—For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me.

ROSMER. More than what you have told me?

REBECCA. Yes. Something different and something more.

ROSMER (*with a faint smile*). Is it not strange, Rebecca? An idea of the sort has crossed my mind already now and then.

REBECCA. Has it? And yet——? Even so——?

ROSMER. I never believed in it. I only played with it—in my thoughts, you understand.

REBECCA. If you wish it, I will tell you all, at once.

ROSMER (*turning it off*). No, no! I will not hear a word. Whatever it may be—I can forget it.

REBECCA. But I cannot.

ROSMER. Oh Rebecca——!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer—*this* is the terrible part of it: that now, when all life's happiness is within my grasp—my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it.

ROSMER. Your past is dead, Rebecca. It has no hold on you any more—it is no part of you—as you are *now*.

REBECCA. Oh, you know that these are only phrases, dear. And innocence? Where am I to get that from?

ROSMER (*sadly*). Yes, yes,—innocence.

REBECCA. Innocence, yes. In it is joy and happiness. *That* was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of joyful noble-men.

ROSMER. Oh, don't remind me of *that*. It was only an immature dream, Rebecca—a precipitate idea, that I myself no longer believe in. Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca.

REBECCA (*softly*). Not by quiet love, Rosmer?

ROSMER (*thoughtfully*). Yes—*that* would be the greatest thing—almost the most glorious in life, I think—if it were so. (*Moves uneasily.*) But how can I assure myself on such a question as that? How get to the bottom of it?

REBECCA. Do you not believe me, Rosmer?

ROSMER. Oh Rebecca—how *can* I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new. If you have an object in the background, tell me plainly what it is. Is there anything you want to gain by it? You know that I will gladly do all that is in my power for you.

REBECCA (*wringing her hands*). Oh this killing doubt——! Rosmer—Rosmer!——

ROSMER. Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it. I shall never be able to shake off the doubt. I can never know with certainty that you are mine in pure and perfect love.

REBECCA. But is there nothing within yourself that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

ROSMER. Oh Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming men. My belief in myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

REBECCA (*looks darkly at him*). Then how will you be able to live your life?

ROSMER. That I don't know. I don't understand how. I don't think I *can* live it. And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for.

REBECCA. Oh, life—life will renew itself. Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer.—We shall leave it soon enough.

ROSMER (*springs up restlessly*). Then give me my

faith again! My faith in you, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

REBECCA. Proof? How can I give you proof?

ROSMER. You *must!* (*Walks across the room.*) I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this——

(*A loud knock at the hall door.*)

REBECCA (*starts up from her chair*). Ah—did you hear that?

(*The door opens.* ULRIC BRENDEL *enters. He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them. Otherwise he is dressed as in the first Act. He looks excited.*)

ROSMER. Oh, is it you, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL. Johannes, my boy—I greet you—and farewell!

ROSMER. Where are you going so late?

BRENDEL. Downhill.

ROSMER. How——?

BRENDEL. I am going homewards, my beloved pupil. I am home-sick for the mighty Nothingness.

ROSMER. Something has happened to you, Mr Brendel! What is it?

BRENDEL. So you observe the transformation? Yes—well you may. When I last set foot in these halls—I stood before you as a man of substance, and slapped my breast-pocket.

ROSMER. Indeed! I don't quite understand——

BRENDEL. But as you see me this night, I am a deposed monarch on the ash-heap that was my palace.

ROSMER. If I can help you in any way——

BRENDEL. You have preserved your child-like heart, Johannes. Can you grant me a loan?

ROSMER. Yes, yes, most willingly!

BRENDEL. Can you spare an ideal or two?

ROSMER. What do you say?

BRENDEL. One or two cast-off ideals. It would be doing a good deed. For I'm cleaned out, my boy. Ruined, beggared.

REBECCA. Did you deliver your lecture?

BRENDEL. No, seductive lady. What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am a bankrupt.

REBECCA. But all your unwritten works?

BRENDEL. For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest. And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust. There was *Nichts* and nothing in the whole concern.

ROSMER. But are you so sure of that?

BRENDEL. There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow. The President has convinced me of it.

ROSMER. The President?

BRENDEL. Well well — His Excellency then. *Ganz nach Belieben.*

ROSMER. Whom do you mean?

BRENDEL. Peter Mortensgård, of course.

ROSMER. What?

BRENDEL (*mysteriously*). Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgård is the lord and leader of the future.

Never have I stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgård has the secret of omnipotence. He can do whatever he will.

ROSMER. Oh, don't believe that.

BRENDEL. Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgård never wills more than he can do. Peter Mortensgård is capable of living his life without ideals. And that, do you see—that is just the mighty secret of action and of victory. It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom. *Basta!*

ROSMER (*in a low voice*). Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came.

BRENDEL. *Bien!* then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher. Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind. Build not thy house on shifting sand. And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life.

REBECCA. Is it me you mean?

BRENDEL. Yes, my fascinating mermaid.

REBECCA. Why am I not to be built on?

BRENDEL (*comes a step nearer*). I gather that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory.

REBECCA. And if so——?

BRENDEL. Victory is sure. But—mark me well—on one inevitable condition.

REBECCA. Which is——?

BRENDEL (*takes her gently by the wrist*). That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and hack off her tender, rosy-white little finger—*here*—just *here* at the middle joint. Item,

that the aforesaid loving woman—again gladly—shall slice off her incomparably-moulded left ear. (*Lets her go, and turns to* ROSMER.) Farewell, my conquering Johannes.

ROSMER. Are you going now? In the dark night?

BRENDEL. The dark night is best. Peace be with you. (*He goes.*)

(*There is a short silence in the room.*)

REBECCA (*breathes heavily*). Oh, how close and sultry it is here! (*Goes to the window, opens it, and remains standing by it.*)

ROSMER (*sits down in the arm-chair by the stove*). There's nothing else for it after all, Rebecca. I see it. You must go away.

REBECCA. Yes, I see no choice.

ROSMER. Let us make the most of our last hour. Come here and sit by me.

REBECCA (*goes and sits on the sofa*). What do you want to say to me, Rosmer?

ROSMER. First, I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future.

REBECCA (*smiles*). Hm, *my* future.

ROSMER. I have long ago made arrangements to meet all contingencies. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

REBECCA. That too, my dear one?

ROSMER. You might surely have known that.

REBECCA. It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things.

ROSMER. Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us.

REBECCA. Yes, I thought so.

ROSMER. So did I. But if I were to go——

REBECCA. Oh, Rosmer—you will live longer than I.

ROSMER. Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands.

REBECCA. What is this! You're never thinking of——!

ROSMER. Do you think it would be so strange? After the pitiful, lamentable defeat that I have suffered! I, who was to have borne a great mission on to victory. And now I have fled from the battle before it was well begun.

REBECCA. Take up the battle again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands of minds. Only try.

ROSMER. Oh Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission.

REBECCA. But your mission has been put to the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—*me* you have ennobled for the rest of my life.

ROSMER. Oh—if I dared believe that.

REBECCA (*pressing her hands together*). Oh Rosmer,—do you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

ROSMER (*starts as if in fear*). Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

REBECCA. Yes, this is just what we must speak about. Do you know of anything that would stifle the doubt? For *I* know of nothing in the world.

ROSMER. Best for you that you do not know.—Best for both of us.

REBECCA. No, no, no,—I will not be put off with this! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

ROSMER (*as if impelled against his will to speak*). Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you; that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

REBECCA. I am ready.

ROSMER. At any time?

REBECCA. At any time you please. The sooner the better.

ROSMER. Then let me see, Rebecca,—if you for my sake—this very evening—— (*Breaks off.*) Oh, no, no, no!

REBECCA. Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Tell me, and you shall see.

ROSMER. Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way that Beata went?

REBECCA (*rises slowly from the sofa; almost voiceless*). Rosmer——!

ROSMER. Yes, Rebecca—that is the question that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh I think I see you before my eyes. You are standing out on the foot-bridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water!

No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what *she* dared.

REBECCA. But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

ROSMER. I should have to believe you then. I should recover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

REBECCA (*takes up her shawl slowly, and puts it over her head; says with composure*). You shall have your faith again.

ROSMER. Have you will and courage enough—for this, Rebecca?

REBECCA. You must judge of that to-morrow—or afterwards—when they recover my body.

ROSMER (*puts his hand to his forehead*). There is a horrible fascination in this——!

REBECCA. For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

ROSMER (*springs up*). But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

REBECCA. Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

ROSMER. I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

REBECCA. It will be no defeat.

ROSMER. Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

REBECCA. Do you think not?

ROSMER. Never. You are not like Beata. You are not under the power of a distorted view of life.

REBECCA. But I am under the power of the Rosmersholm view of life—*now*. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

ROSMER (*looks at her fixedly*). Is *that* your feeling?

REBECCA. Yes.

ROSMER (*with resolution*). Well then, *I* am firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us; and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

REBECCA (*misunderstanding him*). Yes, that too. That too. My departure will save what is best in you.

ROSMER. Oh, there is nothing left to save in me.

REBECCA. Yes, there is. But I—after this day I should only be a sea-troll hanging as a drag upon the ship that is to carry you forward. I must go overboard. What good would it be to remain up here in the world, dragging after me my own crippled life? To brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer.

ROSMER. If you go—I go with you.

REBECCA (*smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly*). Yes, come with me—and be a witness——

ROSMER. I go with you, I say.

REBECCA. To the foot-bridge, yes. You know you never dare go out upon it.

ROSMER. Have you noticed that?

REBECCA (*sadly and brokenly*). Yes.—It was that that made my love hopeless.

ROSMER. Rebecca,—now I lay my hand on your head—(*Does so*)—and I wed you as my true wife.

REBECCA (*takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast*). Thanks, Rosmer. (*Lets him go.*) And now I will go—gladly.

ROSMER. Man and wife should go together.

REBECCA. Only to the bridge, Rosmer.

ROSMER. Out on to it too. As far as you go—so far shall I go with you. For now I dare.

REBECCA. Are you absolutely certain that this way is the best for you?

ROSMER. I am certain that it is the only way.

REBECCA. If you were deceiving yourself? If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. It may be so. For we never can escape from them—we of the house.

REBECCA. Then stay, Rosmer!

ROSMER. The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

REBECCA. Yes, but first tell me this: Is it you who go with me? Or is it I who go with you?

ROSMER. We shall never think that question out.

REBECCA. But I should like to know.

ROSMER. We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me.

REBECCA. I almost think so too.

ROSMER. For now we two are one.

REBECCA. Yes. We are one. Come! We go gladly.

(*They go out hand in hand through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left. The door is left open.*)

(*The room stands empty for a little while. Then the door to the right is opened by* MADAM HELSETH.)

MADAM HELSETH. Miss West—the carriage is—— (*Looks round.*) Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well—I must say——! Hm! (*Goes out into the hall, looks round, and comes in again.*) Not on the garden seat. Ah, well well. (*Goes to the window and looks out.*) Oh good God! that white thing *there——!* My soul! They're both of them out on the bridge! God forgive the sinful creatures—if they're not in each other's arms! (*Shrieks aloud.*) Oh—down—both of them! Out into the mill-race! Help! Help! (*Her knees tremble; she holds on to the chair-back, shaking all over; she can scarcely get the words out.*) No. No help here.—The dead wife has taken them.

THE LADY FROM THE SEA.

(1888.)

Characters.

DOCTOR WANGEL,[1] *district physician.*
ELLIDA[2] WANGEL, *his second wife.*
BOLETTA, } *his daughters by his*
HILDA, *a young girl,* } *former marriage.*
ARNHOLM, *a schoolmaster.*
LYNGSTRAND.
BALLESTED.
A STRANGER.
Young Townspeople.
Tourists, etc.

The action takes place in the summer-time, in a small town beside a fiord in Northern Norway.

[1] Pronounce *Vangl.*
[2] Pronounce *El-lee-da*, with accent on the second syllable.

THE LADY FROM THE SEA.

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

Act First.

(DOCTOR WANGEL'S *house, with a large veranda, on the left. Garden in front and around. Near the veranda, a flag-staff. To the right, in the garden, a summer-house, with table and chairs. A hedge, with a small gate, in the background. Behind the hedge, a road along the shore. Trees on each side of the road. Between the trees there is a view of the fiord, with high mountain ranges and peaks in the distance. It is a warm and brilliantly clear summer morning.*)

(BALLESTED, *a middle-aged man, dressed in an old velvet jacket and broad-brimmed artist's hat, stands at the foot of the flag-staff, arranging the cord. The flag is lying on the ground. A little way off stands an easel with a stretched canvas. Beside it, on a camp-stool, are brushes, palette, and a paint-box.*)

(BOLETTA WANGEL *comes through the open garden-room door, out upon the veranda. She is carrying a large vase of flowers, which she places upon the table.*)

BOLETTA. Well, Ballested,—can you get it to run?

BALLESTED. Oh yes, Miss Boletta. It's easy enough.—May I ask if you are expecting visitors to-day?

BOLETTA. Yes, we expect Mr. Arnholm this morning. He came to town last night.

BALLESTED. Arnholm? Wait a moment—wasn't Arnholm the name of the tutor you had here some years ago?

BOLETTA. Yes, this is the very man.

BALLESTED. Ah, indeed. So he's come into these parts again?

BOLETTA. That's why we want the flag run up.

BALLESTED. Ah, I see, I see.

(BOLETTA *goes into the garden-room again.*)

(*Shortly afterwards,* LYNGSTRAND *comes along the road from the right and stops, interested by the sight of the easel and painter's things. He is a poorly but neatly dressed stripling, of delicate appearance.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*outside, by the hedge*). Good morning.

BALLESTED (*turning round*). Ah, good morning. (*Hoists the flag.*) So-ho!—up goes the balloon! (*Makes the cord fast, and begins to busy himself at the easel.*) Good morning, sir. I don't think I have the pleasure of——

LYNGSTRAND. You're a painter, are you not?

BALLESTED. Yes, certainly. Why shouldn't I be?

LYNGSTRAND. Ah, I can see you are.—May I come in for a moment?

BALLESTED. Do you want to have a look at it?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I should like to extremely.

BALLESTED. Oh there's nothing much to see yet. But pray come in—come along

LYNGSTRAND. Many thanks.

(*He comes in through the garden-gate.*)

BALLESTED (*painting*). It's the fiord over there between the islands that I'm working at.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I see.

BALLESTED. But I haven't put the figure in yet. There's no such thing as a model to be had in the town.

LYNGSTRAND. Ah, there's to be a figure?

BALLESTED. Yes. By the rock in the foreground here, I mean to have a half-dead mermaid lying.

LYNGSTRAND. Why half-dead?

BALLESTED. She has strayed in from the sea, and can't find her way out again. So she lies here dying by inches in the brackish water, you understand.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, I see.

BALLESTED. It was the lady of the house here that suggested the thing to me.

LYNGSTRAND. What are you going to call the picture, when it's finished?

BALLESTED. I'm thinking of calling it "The Mermaid's End."

LYNGSTRAND. Capital. I'm sure you'll make something good out of this.

BALLESTED (*looking at him*). Perhaps you're in the same line?

LYNGSTRAND. A painter do you mean?

BALLESTED. Yes.

LYNGSTRAND. No, I'm not. But I'm going to be a sculptor. My name is Hans Lyngstrand.

BALLESTED. Going to be a sculptor, are you?

Well well, sculpture's a fine, showy art, too. I think I've seen you in the street once or twice. Have you been staying here long?

LYNGSTRAND. No, I've only been here a fortnight. But I hope to stop the whole summer.

BALLESTED. Fond of watering-place dissipations, eh?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, I really want to get up my strength a bit.

BALLESTED. Not delicate, I hope?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, I'm what you'd call a little delicate. Nothing to speak of, you know. It's only a sort of short-windedness in my chest.

BALLESTED. Pooh—a trifle! You should consult a good doctor, all the same.

LYNGSTRAND. I've been thinking of speaking to Dr. Wangel sometime when I've a chance.

BALLESTED. Yes, do. (*Looks out to the left.*) There comes a steamer again. Chock full of passengers. It's wonderful how the tourist trade has increased here during the last few years.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, there seems to be a lot of traffic.

BALLESTED. The town's full of summer lodgers too. I'm sometimes afraid that our good town may lose its individuality with all this coming and going.

LYNGSTRAND. Are you a native of the place?

BALLESTED. No, I'm not. But I've become accla—acclimatised. I feel myself attached to the place by the bonds of time and habit.

LYNGSTRAND. You've lived here a long time then?

BALLESTED. Well, seventeen or eighteen years. I came here with Skive's[1] dramatic company. But we got into financial difficulties, so the company dissolved and was scattered to the winds.

LYNGSTRAND. But you remained?

BALLESTED. I remained. And I haven't done so badly. You see at that time I used to work mainly at the decorative branch of art.

(BOLETTA *comes out with a rocking-chair, which she places in the veranda.*)

BOLETTA (*speaking into the garden-room*). Hilda,—see if you can find the embroidered footstool for father.

LYNGSTRAND (*goes over towards the veranda and bows*). Good morning, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA (*by the balustrade*). Ah, is that you, Mr. Lyngstrand? Good morning. Excuse me a moment —I must just——

(*Goes into the house.*)

BALLESTED. Do you know the family here?

LYNGSTRAND. Very slightly. I've met the young ladies once or twice at other houses. And I had a little talk with Mrs. Wangel the last time there was music up at the Prospect. She said I might come and see them.

BALLESTED. I'll tell you what,—you ought to cultivate their acquaintance.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I've been thinking of paying them a visit—just a sort of call, you know. If I could only find some pretext——

BALLESTED. Oh nonsense,—a pretext—— (*Looks*

[1] Pronounce *Sheevë's*.

out to the left.) Confound it! (*Collects his things*) The steamer's alongside the pier already. I must be off to the hotel. Perhaps some of the new arrivals may require my services. I must tell you that I also practise as a barber and *friseur*.

LYNGSTRAND. You seem to be very versatile.

BALLESTED. One must ac—climatise oneself to various professions in these small places. If you should ever require anything in the hair line—pomade or what not—you have only to ask for Dancing-Master Ballested.

LYNGSTRAND. Dancing-Master?

BALLESTED. President of the Musical Society, if you prefer it. We have a concert up at the Prospect this evening. Good-bye, good-bye.

(*He goes with his painting things through the garden gate, and then out to the left.* HILDA *comes out with the stool.* BOLETTA *brings more flowers.* LYNGSTRAND *bows to* HILDA *from the garden.*)

HILDA (*by the balustrade, without returning the bow*). Boletta said you had ventured in to-day.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I took the liberty of coming into the garden.

HILDA. Have you been for your morning constitutional?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, no,—I haven't had much of a walk to-day.

HILDA. Have you been bathing then?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I had a little dip. I saw your mother down there. She was just going into her bathing-house.

HILDA. Who was?

LYNGSTRAND. Your mother.

HILDA. Oh indeed. (*She places the stool in front of the rocking-chair.*)

BOLETTA (*as if to change the subject*). Did you see anything of my father's boat out in the fiord?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I thought I saw a sailing-boat heading inwards.

BOLETTA. That's sure to have been father. He has been out visiting patients on the islands. (*She arranges things about the table.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*standing on the lowest step of the veranda*). Why what a show of flowers you have here——!

BOLETTA. Yes, doesn't it look nice?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, charming. It looks as if there were some great occasion in the family.

HILDA. So there is.

LYNGSTRAND. I guessed as much. Your father's birthday, I suppose?

BOLETTA (*warningly to* HILDA). Hm,—hm!

HILDA (*not heeding her*). No, mother's.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh indeed,—your mother's, is it?

BOLETTA (*in a low, angry tone*). Now, Hilda——!

HILDA (*in the same tone*). Let me alone! (*To* LYNGSTRAND.) I suppose you're going home to lunch now?

LYNGSTRAND (*descending from the step*). Yes, I suppose I must see about getting something to eat.

HILDA. No doubt you live on the fat of the land at the hotel?

LYNGSTRAND. I'm not staying at the hotel now. It was too expensive for me.

HILDA. Where are you now, then?

LYNGSTRAND. Up at Madam Jensen's.[1]

HILDA. Which Madam Jensen's?

LYNGSTRAND. The midwife's.

HILDA. Excuse me, Mr. Lyngstrand, but I'm far too busy to——

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, I'm afraid I oughtn't to have said that.

HILDA. Said what?

LYNGSTRAND. What I said just now.

HILDA (*looks at him witheringly from top to toe*). I really don't understand you.

LYNGSTRAND. No, no. I must bid you good-bye for the present, ladies.

BOLETTA (*comes forward to the steps*). Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Lyngstrand. You must please excuse us for to-day.—But another time when you've nothing better to do—and when you feel inclined,—I hope you'll look in and see father and—and the rest of us.

LYNGSTRAND. Many thanks. I shall be only too delighted.

(*He bows and goes out by the garden gate. As he passes along the road outside, to the left, he bows again towards the veranda.*)

HILDA (*under her breath*). Adieu, Mossyoo! My love to Mother Jensen.

BOLETTA (*softly, shakes her by the arm*).

[1] Pronounce *Yensen.*

Hilda——! You naughty child! Are you mad? He might easily hear you!

HILDA. Pooh,—do you think I care?

BOLETTA (*looks out to the right*). Here comes father.

(DOCTOR WANGEL, *in travelling dress and carrying a hand-bag, comes along the footpath from the right.*)

WANGEL. Well, here I am again, little girls!

(*He comes in through the gate.*)

BOLETTA (*goes down to meet him in the garden*). Oh, I'm so glad you've come.

HILDA (*also going down to him*). Have you finished for the day now, father?

WANGEL. Oh no, I must go down to the surgery for a little while by-and-by.—Tell me,—do you know whether Arnholm has arrived?

BOLETTA. Yes, he came last night. We sent to the hotel to inquire.

WANGEL. Then you haven't seen him yet?

BOLETTA. No. But he's sure to look in this forenoon.

WANGEL. Yes, of course he will.

HILDA (*pulling him*). Father, you must look about you now.

WANGEL (*looking towards the veranda*). Yes, I see, child.—It's quite festive here.

BOLETTA. Don't you think we've arranged it beautifully?

WANGEL. Yes, indeed you have.—Is—are we alone in the house?

HILDA. Yes, she has gone to——

BOLETTA (*interrupts quickly*). Mother is bathing.

WANGEL (*looks kindly at* BOLETTA *and pats her head. Then he says somewhat hesitatingly:*) Look here, little girls—are you going to keep up this display all day? And the flag hoisted too?

HILDA. Why, of course we are, father!

WANGEL. Hm—yes. But you see——

BOLETTA (*nodding and smiling to him*). Don't you understand that it's all in honour of Arnholm. When such an old friend comes to see you for the first time——

HILDA (*smiling and shaking him*). Remember—wasn't he Boletta's tutor, father?

WANGEL (*half smiling*). You're a pair of regular sly-boots.—Well well,—after all, it's only natural that we should remember her who is no longer among us. But all the same——. Look here, Hilda. (*Gives her his hand-bag.*) Please take this to the surgery.—No, little girls,—I don't like all this—not the manner of it, you understand. That we should go every year and——. Well, what can one say? I suppose there's nothing else for it.

HILDA (*is about to go through the garden to the left with the hand-bag, but stops, turns, and points*). Look at that gentleman coming along. I believe it's Mr. Arnholm.

BOLETTA (*looks in the same direction*). He! (*Laughs.*) Come, that's really too good! To take that middle-aged man for Mr. Arnholm!

WANGEL. Wait a bit, child. Upon my life, I believe it's he! Yes, I'm sure of it!

BOLETTA (*gazing fixedly, in quiet astonishment*). Yes, so it is——!

(ARNHOLM, *in elegant morning dress, with gold spectacles and a light cane, appears on the road, coming from the left. He looks somewhat overworked. On seeing the party in the garden, he bows in a friendly way, and comes through the gate.*)

WANGEL (*going to meet him*). Welcome, my dear Arnholm! Heartily welcome to your old haunts again!

ARNHOLM. Thank you, thank you, Doctor Wangel. A thousand thanks. (*They shake hands and walk across the garden together.*) And here are the children! (*Holds out his hands to them and looks at them.*) These two I should scarcely have known again.

WANGEL. No, I daresay not.

ARNHOLM. Oh well,—perhaps Boletta.—Yes, I should have known Boletta.

WANGEL. Scarcely, I think. Let me see, it's eight or nine years since you saw her last. Ah yes, there's been many a change here since then.

ARNHOLM (*looking about him*). I should hardly say so. Except that the trees have grown a bit, and you've got a new summer-house there——

WANGEL. Oh no, outwardly perhaps——

ARNHOLM (*smiles*). And of course you have now two grown-up daughters in the house.

WANGEL. Oh, only one grown-up, surely.

HILDA (*half-aloud*). Just listen to father!

WANGEL. And now suppose we sit in the veranda. It's cooler there than here. Come along.

ARNHOLM. Thanks, thanks, my dear Doctor.

(*They go up the steps.* WANGEL *gives* ARNHOLM *the rocking-chair.*)

WANGEL. There now. Now you shall just sit quiet and have a good rest. You're looking rather done up after your journey.

ARNHOLM. Oh, it's nothing. Now that I'm here again——

BOLETTA (*to* WANGEL). Shall we bring a little soda-water and syrup into the garden-room? It will soon be too warm out here.

WANGEL. Yes do, little girls. Soda-water and syrup. And perhaps a little cognac.

BOLETTA. Cognac too?

WANGEL. Only a little. In case any one would like some.

BOLETTA. Very well. Hilda, will you take the hand-bag down to the surgery?

(BOLETTA *goes into the garden-room and closes the door after her.* HILDA *takes the bag and, going through the garden, disappears behind the house to the left.*)

ARNHOLM (*who has been following* BOLETTA *with his eyes*). What a splendid girl—what splendid girls they have grown into!

WANGEL (*seats himself*). Yes, don't you think so?

ARNHOLM. Boletta quite astonishes me—and Hilda too, for that matter.—But you yourself, my dear Doctor—do you intend to remain here for the rest of your days?

WANGEL. Oh yes, that's what it will come to, I suppose. I was born and bred here, as the saying goes. Here I lived very very happily with her who

was so early taken from us—her whom you knew when you were here before, Arnholm.

ARNHOLM. Yes—yes.

WANGEL. And now I live here so happily with her who has taken that dear one's place. I must say that, take it all in all, the fates have been kind to me.

ARNHOLM. You have no children by your second marriage?

WANGEL. We had a little boy, two or two and a half years ago. But we did not keep him long. He died when he was four or five months old.

ARNHOLM. Is your wife not at home just now?

WANGEL. No, but she'll be here very soon. She has gone to have a bathe. She never misses a day at this season; no matter what the weather may be.

ARNHOLM. Is she out of health?

WANGEL. No, not exactly; but she has been curiously nervous the last couple of years or so—off and on, you know. I can't quite make out what's wrong with her. But this daily dip in the sea is her life and delight.

ARNHOLM. I remember that of old.

WANGEL (*with an almost imperceptible smile*). Yes, of course, you knew Ellida when you were tutor out at Skioldvik.[1]

ARNHOLM. Of course. She often visited at the parsonage. And I used generally to see her when I went to the lighthouse to have a talk with her father.

WANGEL. Her life out there has left a deep

[1] Pronounce *Sholdvik*.

impression upon her, as you may imagine. In town here, people can't understand it at all. They call her "the lady from the sea."

ARNHOLM. Do they?

WANGEL. Yes. And look here—speak to her about the old days, my dear Arnholm. It will do her no end of good.

ARNHOLM (*looking doubtfully at him*). Have you any reason to think so?

WANGEL. Yes, certainly I have.

ELLIDA'S VOICE (*heard without, in the garden to the right*). Are you there, Wangel?

WANGEL (*rising*). Yes, dear.

(MRS. WANGEL, *with a large light wrapper round her, and with wet hair hanging loose over her shoulders, comes from among the trees beside the summer-house.* ARNHOLM *rises.*)

WANGEL (*smiling and stretching out his hands towards her*). Ah, here comes the mermaid!

ELLIDA (*hastens up to the veranda and seizes his hands*). Thank heaven, you're safe home again! When did you come?

WANGEL. Just now—a moment ago. (*Points to* ARNHOLM.) But have you nothing to say to an old acquaintance?

ELLIDA (*holds out her hand to* ARNHOLM). So you've really come then? Welcome! And excuse my not being at home——

ARNHOLM. Oh, don't mention it. Pray don't stand on ceremony——

WANGEL. Was the water nice and cool to-day?

ELLIDA. Cool! Why, the water never is cool here

—so tepid and flat. Pah! the water is sickly in here in the fiords.

ARNHOLM. Sickly?

ELLIDA. Yes, sickly. And I believe it makes one sickly too.

WANGEL (*smiling*). A nice testimonial for a sea-bathing place.

ARNHOLM. I should rather say, Mrs. Wangel, that you stand in a peculiar relation to the sea and all that belongs to it.

ELLIDA. Well, you may be right. I almost think so myself.—But have you noticed how the girls have been decorating the place in your honour?

WANGEL (*embarrassed*). Hm. (*Looks at his watch.*) It's time I were going——

ARNHOLM. Is it really in my honour?

ELLIDA. Why, of course it is. We're not so fine as this every day. Pah! How suffocatingly hot it is under this roof! (*Goes down into the garden.*) Come over here! There's a breath of air to be had here at any rate. (*She seats herself in the summer-house.*)

ARNHOLM (*goes to her*). The air is quite fresh here, it seems to me.

ELLIDA. Yes, to you, accustomed to the close air of Christiania. I'm told it's perfectly dreadful there in summer.

WANGEL (*who has also gone down into the garden*). Hm, Ellida dear, I shall have to leave you to entertain our good friend here for a while.

ELLIDA. Have you work to do?

WANGEL. Yes, I must go down to the surgery,

and then I must change my clothes. But I won't be long——

ARNHOLM (*seats himself in the summer-house*). Don't hurry, my dear Doctor. Your wife and I will manage to pass the time.

WANGEL. Ah yes—I'm sure of that. Well, good-bye for the present then!

(*He goes out through the garden to the left.*)

ELLIDA (*after a short silence*). Don't you think it's nice sitting here?

ARNHOLM. I think it's very nice.

ELLIDA. This is called my summer-house; for it was I that had it put up. Or rather Wangel had it put up for me.

ARNHOLM. And you usually sit in it?

ELLIDA. Yes, I pass most of the day here.

ARNHOLM. With the girls, I suppose.

ELLIDA. No, the girls—they generally keep to the veranda.

ARNHOLM. And Wangel?

ELLIDA. Oh, Wangel goes to and fro. Sometimes he's here with me, and sometimes over there with the children.

ARNHOLM. Is it you that have arranged things so?

ELLIDA. I think it's the most comfortable arrangement for all parties. We can speak across to each other now and again—whenever we seem to have anything to say.

ARNHOLM (*after a time in thought*). When last I crossed your path—out at Skioldvik, I mean——. Hm—that's a long time ago——

ELLIDA. It's just ten years since you were out at our place.

ARNHOLM. Yes, about that. But when I remember you out there in the lighthouse——! "The heathen," as the old pastor used to call you, because he said your father had had you christened with the name of a ship and not of a Christian——

ELLIDA. Well, what then?

ARNHOLM. The last thing I should have expected was to meet you again, here, as Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA. No, at that time Wangel had not become a——. The girls' first mother was living then—their own mother, I mean——

ARNHOLM. Of course, of course. But even if it hadn't been so—even if he had stood alone—I should never have expected this to happen.

ELLIDA. Nor I. Never in this world—then.

ARNHOLM. Wangel is such a fine fellow; so upright; so genuinely good-hearted and kind to every one——

ELLIDA (*warmly and heartily*). Yes, indeed he is!

ARNHOLM. ——but he must be so utterly different from you, I should think.

ELLIDA. You're right there too; we *are* different.

ARNHOLM. Well, how did it come about? How was it?

ELLIDA. You mustn't ask me, my dear Arnholm. I shouldn't be able to explain it to you. And even if I could, you wouldn't be able really to understand a word of my explanation.

ARNHOLM. Hm——. (*A little more softly.*) Have you ever told your husband anything about

me? I mean, of course, about the unsuccessful step I was once rash enough to take.

ELLIDA. No. Can you think I would? I have never said a word to him about—about what you allude to.

ARNHOLM. I am glad of that. I felt a little embarrassed at the thought that——

ELLIDA. You need not at all. I have only told him what is true—that I liked you very much, and that you were the truest and best friend I had out there.

ARNHOLM. Thank you for that. But now tell me—why have you never written to me since I left?

ELLIDA. I thought it might perhaps be painful to you to hear from one who—who could not meet your wishes. It was like opening an old wound, I thought.

ARNHOLM. Hm——. Yes, yes, I daresay you were right.

ELLIDA. But why did you never write yourself?

ARNHOLM (*looks at her and smiles half reproachfully*). I? I begin? And perhaps be suspected of wishing to reopen the attack? After meeting with such a repulse?

ELLIDA. Oh no, I can understand that too.—Have you never thought of forming some other tie?

ARNHOLM. Never. I have remained faithful to my memories.

ELLIDA (*half joking*). Oh, nonsense! Let the sad old memories go. I'm sure you'd much better see about becoming a happy husband.

ARNHOLM. Then I've no time to lose, Mrs.

Wangel. Remember—I blush to say it—I shall never see seven-and-thirty again.

ELLIDA. Well then, all the more reason to make haste. (*Is silent for a moment, then says earnestly and in a low tone.*) But listen now, my dear Arnholm,—I'm going to tell you a thing I couldn't have told you at that time, to save my life.

ARNHOLM. What may that be?

ELLIDA. When you took—that unsuccessful step, as you said just now,—I *could* not answer you otherwise than I did.

ARNHOLM. I know that. You had nothing but friendship to offer me. I quite understand that.

ELLIDA. But you do not know that my whole mind and all my thoughts were bent elsewhere at that time?

ARNHOLM. At that time?

ELLIDA. Yes, just then.

ARNHOLM. But that's impossible! You are mistaken as to the time! I think you scarcely knew Wangel then.

ELLIDA. It's not Wangel I'm speaking of.

ARNHOLM. Not Wangel? But at that time—out at Skioldvik—I don't remember another creature that you could possibly care for.

ELLIDA. No, no,—I daresay not. For the whole thing was such a piece of madness.

ARNHOLM. Do tell me about this!

ELLIDA. Oh, it's enough for you to know that I was not free at that time. And now you know it.

ARNHOLM. And if you had been free at that time?

ELLIDA. What then?

ARNHOLM. Would your answer to my letter have been different?

ELLIDA. How can I tell? When Wangel came, my answer was different.

ARNHOLM. What is the use of telling me that you were not free?

ELLIDA (*rises, as if in distress and agitation*). Because I must have some one to confide in. No no, don't rise.

ARNHOLM. Your husband, then, knows nothing of the matter?

ELLIDA. I told him from the first that my fancy had once been fixed elsewhere, and he has never wanted to know more. We have never touched upon the subject since. After all, it was nothing but a piece of madness; and then it all came to an end so quickly. At least,—in a way.

ARNHOLM (*rising*). Only in a way? Not entirely?

ELLIDA. Oh yes, of course! My dear, good Arnholm, it is not at all as you suppose. It's something quite incomprehensible. I don't think I could find words to tell you of it. You would only think I was ill, or stark mad.

ARNHOLM. My dear Mrs. Wangel—now you must and shall tell me the whole story.

ELLIDA. Well then, I must try. How will you, with your sound common-sense, be able to understand that—— (*Looks out, and breaks off.*) Wait—here's some one coming.

(LYNGSTRAND *appears on the road, from the left, and enters the garden. He has a flower in his*

button-hole and carries a large handsome bouquet, wrapped round with paper and tied with ribbons. He stops, hesitating a little, in front of the veranda.)

ELLIDA (*coming forward in the summer-house*). Is it the girls you're looking for, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND (*turning*). Ah, are you there, Mrs. Wangel? (*Bows and approaches.*) No, not exactly—it wasn't the young ladies. It was you yourself, Mrs. Wangel. You gave me permission to come and see you——

ELLIDA. Yes, of course I did. You're always welcome here.

LYNGSTRAND. Many thanks. I fortunately happened to hear that this was a day of rejoicing in the family——

ELLIDA. Ah, so you know that?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; and so I make so bold as to offer you this, Mrs. Wangel.

(*He bows and holds out the bouquet.*)

ELLIDA (*smiles*). But, my dear Mr. Lyngstrand, oughtn't you to give your beautiful flowers to Mr. Arnholm himself? For it's in his honour that——

LYNGSTRAND (*looks in bewilderment from one to the other*). I beg your pardon—I don't know this gentleman. It's only——. I meant them for a birthday gift, Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA. A birthday gift? You've made a mistake, Mr. Lyngstrand. It's no one's birthday here to-day.

LYNGSTRAND (*smiling quietly*). Oh, I know all about it. But I didn't know it was such a secret.

ELLIDA. What do you know?

LYNGSTRAND. That it's your birthday, Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA. Mine?

ARNHOLM (*looking at her inquiringly*). To-day? No, surely not.

ELLIDA (*to* LYNGSTRAND). What has put that into your head?

LYNGSTRAND. It was Miss Hilda that let it out. I happened to look in a little while ago, and I asked the young ladies why they had made such a grand display of flowers and flags——

ELLIDA. Well?

LYNGSTRAND. ——and Miss Hilda answered: "Oh, because it's mother's birthday."

ELLIDA. Mother's——! Oh indeed.

ARNHOLM. Aha!

(*He and* ELLIDA *exchange glances of comprehension.*)

ARNHOLM. Well, since the young man has found it out, Mrs. Wangel——

ELLIDA (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Yes, since you've found it out——

LYNGSTRAND (*offers the bouquet again*). May I be permitted to offer my congratulations——?

ELLIDA (*taking the flowers*). Many thanks.—Won't you sit down a moment, Mr. Lyngstrand?

(ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *seat themselves in the summer-house.*)

ELLIDA. All this about—about my birthday—was to have been a secret, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM. So I see. It was not to have been mentioned to us uninitiated.

ELLIDA (*lays the bouquet on the table*). No, just so. Not to the uninitiated.

LYNGSTRAND. I promise I won't mention it to a living creature.

ELLIDA. Oh, I didn't mean that.—But how are you now? I think you're looking better than you used to.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I think I'm getting on all right. And next year, if I can get to the south——

ELLIDA. The girls tell me you hope to manage it.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; I have a patron in Bergen who provides for me; and he has promised to let me go next year.

ELLIDA. How did you come across him?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, it was a great stroke of luck. You see I once went a voyage in one of his ships.

ELLIDA. Did you? Then at that time you wanted to be a sailor?

LYNGSTRAND. No, not in the least. But after my mother died, my father wouldn't have me hanging about at home, so he sent me to sea. On the voyage home, we were wrecked in the English Channel; and that was a grand thing for me.

ARNHOLM. How do you mean?

LYNGSTRAND. It was in the wreck that I got my injury—this in my chest. I was in the ice-cold water so long before they came and rescued me. So then I had to give up the sea.—Yes, it was a great stroke of luck indeed.

ARNHOLM. Ah! You think so?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; for the injury is nothing to speak of, and now I'm to have my heart's desire, and

be a sculptor. Only think—to be able to model in the lovely clay that yields so exquisitely under your fingers!

ELLIDA. And what are you going to model? Mermen and mermaids? Or is it to be old vikings——?

LYNGSTRAND. No, nothing of that kind. As soon as I can manage it, I mean to have a try at a big piece of work—a group, as they call it.

ELLIDA. I see. And what is the group to represent?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, I thought of something out of my own experience.

ARNHOLM. Yes yes, stick to that.

ELLIDA. But what is it to be?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, I'd thought of a young woman, a sailor's wife, lying and sleeping in a strange unrest, and dreaming as she sleeps. I think I can make it so that any one can see she's dreaming.

ARNHOLM. And is that all?

LYNGSTRAND. No. There's to be another figure —a kind of shape you might call it. It's the husband she's been unfaithful to while he was away. And now he's drowned.

ARNHOLM. Why, what do you mean——?

ELLIDA. Drowned, you say?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, he's drowned at sea. But the strange thing is that he has come home all the same. It's in the night-time; and there he stands by her bedside and looks at her. He must be dripping wet, just as when they haul you up out of the sea.

ELLIDA (*leaning back in her chair*). What a

strange idea! (*Closes her eyes.*) Oh, I can see it livingly before my eyes!

ARNHOLM. But in the name of all that's wonderful, Mr.—— Mr.——! You said it was to be something out of your own experience?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes,—this is out of my experience; in a sense, that's to say.

ARNHOLM. You've seen a dead man come——?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, I don't mean to say I've exactly seen it; not outwardly, of course. But all the same——

ELLIDA (*with animation and anxiously*). Tell me all you know about this! I want to understand it thoroughly.

ARNHOLM (*smiling*). Yes, of course this is quite in your line—anything with the glamour of the sea about it.

ELLIDA. How was it then, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, you see, when we were starting for home in the brig, from a town they call Halifax, we had to leave our boatswain behind us in the hospital; so we shipped an American in his place. This new boatswain——

ELLIDA. The American?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes;—one day he borrowed from the captain a bundle of old newspapers, and was perpetually poring over them. He wanted to learn Norwegian, he said.

ELLIDA. Well; and then?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, one evening it was blowing great guns. All hands were on deck—all except the boatswain and me. For he had sprained his ankle

and couldn't walk; and I wasn't very well, and was lying in my bunk. Well, there he sat in the fo'csle, reading away as usual at one of the old papers——

ELLIDA. Well? well?

LYNGSTRAND. When all of a sudden, I heard him give a kind of a yell; and when I looked at him I saw that his face was as white as chalk. Then he set to work to crumple and crush the paper up and tear it into a thousand little pieces; but that he did quietly, quietly.

ELLIDA. Did he say nothing at all? Did he not speak?

LYNGSTRAND. Not at first. But presently he said, as if to himself: "Married—to another man—while I was away."

ELLIDA (*shuts her eyes, and says half to herself:*) Did he say that?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; and would you believe it—he said it in perfectly good Norwegian. He must have had a great gift for languages, that man.

ELLIDA. And what then? What happened next?

LYNGSTRAND. Now comes the wonderful part of it—a thing I shall never forget to my dying day. For he added,—and this quite quietly too: "But mine she is, and mine she shall be. And follow me she shall, though I should have to go home and fetch her as a drowned man from the dark sea."

ELLIDA (*pouring out a glass of water; her hand shakes*). Pah—how airless it is to-day——!

LYNGSTRAND. And he said it with such determination that it seemed to me he was the man to do it too.

ELLIDA. Do you know at all—what has become of this man?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh Mrs. Wangel, he's dead, for certain.

ELLIDA (*hastily*). What makes you think that?

LYNGSTRAND. Because when we were shipwrecked afterwards in the Channel, I got off in the long boat with the captain and five others; but the mate went in the dingey, and with him was the American and one man besides.

ELLIDA. And nothing has been heard of them since?

LYNGSTRAND. No, not a word, Mrs. Wangel. My patron wrote me so only the other day. And that's why I'm so anxious to make a group of it. I can see the sailor's faithless wife so life-like before me; and then the avenger who is drowned, yet comes home from sea all the same. I can see them both as distinctly as possible.

ELLIDA. So can I. (*Rising.*) Come,—let us go in. Or rather down to Wangel! It seems to me so stifling here.

(*She goes out of the summer-house.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*who has also risen*). I think I must be going now. I only just looked in to wish you many happy returns of the day.

ELLIDA. Well, if you must go—— (*Holds out her hand.*) Good-bye, and thanks for the flowers.

(LYNGSTRAND *bows and goes through the garden gate, out to the left.*)

ARNHOLM (*rises and goes up to* ELLIDA). I can see that this has pained you deeply, my dear Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA. Oh yes, I suppose you may put it so, although——

ARNHOLM. But after all, it's only what you must have been prepared for.

ELLIDA (*looks at him in surprise*). Prepared for?

ARNHOLM. Yes, so I should think.

ELLIDA. Prepared for his returning——? And in such a way?

ARNHOLM. Why, what in the world——! Is it that crazy sculptor's yarn——?

ELLIDA. Oh my dear Arnholm, he's perhaps not so crazy as you think.

ARNHOLM. It can't be this nonsense about the dead man that has moved you so much? I thought it was——

ELLIDA. What did you think?

ARNHOLM. Of course I thought that was only a blind on your part. I fancied you were pained by the discovery that a family anniversary was being celebrated without your knowledge—that your husband and his children live a life of memories in which you have no share.

ELLIDA. Oh no, no; that doesn't trouble me much. I have no right to claim my husband for myself alone.

ARNHOLM. I think you ought to have, though.

ELLIDA. Yes; but as a matter of fact I haven't; that is the thing. I too live a life—in which the others have no part.

ARNHOLM. You! (*More softly.*) Am I to understand that—you—you do not really love your husband?

ELLIDA. Oh yes, yes—I have come to love him with my whole heart! And that is just why it's so terrible—so inexplicable—so absolutely inconceivable——!

ARNHOLM. Now you must confide all your troubles to me! Will you not, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA. I cannot, dear friend—not now, at any rate. Sometime perhaps.

(BOLETTA *comes out by the veranda, and down into the garden.*)

BOLETTA. Father is coming from the surgery now. Shan't we all sit together in the garden-room?

ELLIDA. Yes, let us.

(WANGEL, *who has changed his clothes, comes with* HILDA *from the left, behind the house.*)

WANGEL. Well now, here I am, entirely at your service! A glass of something cool wouldn't come amiss now.

ELLIDA. Wait a moment.

(*She goes into the summer-house and fetches the bouquet.*)

HILDA. Oh I say! All those lovely flowers! Where did you get them?

ELLIDA. I got them from Lyngstrand the sculptor, my dear Hilda.

HILDA (*starting*). From Lyngstrand?

BOLETTA (*uneasily*). Has Lyngstrand been here—again?

ELLIDA (*with a half-smile*). Yes. He brought this bouquet with him—in honour of the birthday, you know.

BOLETTA (*glancing at* HILDA). Oh——!

HILDA (*mutters*). The beast!

WANGEL (*in painful embarrassment, to* ELLIDA). Hm——. Well, you see—I must tell you, my darling Ellida——

ELLIDA (*interrupting*). Come along, girls! Let us put my flowers in water, with the others.

(*She goes up on to the veranda.*)

BOLETTA (*softly, to* HILDA). Oh, she's really kind, you see.

HILDA (*half-aloud, looking angry*). Monkey-tricks! She's only putting it on to please father.

WANGEL (*up on the veranda, presses* ELLIDA'S *hand*). Thanks—thanks——! I thank you from my heart for this, Ellida!

ELLIDA (*arranging the flowers*). Oh, nonsense,—why shouldn't I join with you in keeping—mother's birthday?

ARNHOLM. Hm——!

(*He goes up to* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA. BOLETTA *and* HILDA *remain below, in the garden.*)

Act Second.

(*Up at the Prospect, a wooded height behind the town. Towards the back stand a landmark and a weather-vane. Large stones for seats are arranged round the landmark and in the foreground. Far away in the background the outer fiord is seen, with islands and jutting promontories. The open sea is not visible. The lower air is full of the pale half-light of a summer night. There is a tinge of orange in the upper air and over the mountain peaks in the far distance. The sound of quartett-singing is faintly heard from the lower slopes on the right.*)

(*Young people from the town, ladies and gentlemen, come in couples up from the right, pass the landmark conversing familiarly, and go out to the left. Shortly afterwards,* BALLESTED *appears, acting as guide to a party of foreign tourists. He is loaded with the ladies' shawls and travelling bags.*)

BALLESTED (*pointing upwards with his stick*). *Sehen Sie, meine Herrschaften—dort* over *liegt eine andere* height. *Das willen wir* also *besteigen, und so herunter——* (*He continues in English, and leads the party out to the right.*)

(HILDA *comes quickly up from the slope on the right, stops, and looks backwards. Presently* BOLETTA *comes up the same way.*)

BOLETTA. My dear Hilda, why should we run away from Lyngstrand?

HILDA. Because I can't endure to walk up hill so slowly. Look—look at him crawling up.

BOLETTA. Oh, you know how ill he is.

HILDA. Do you think it's very serious?

BOLETTA. Yes, I'm sure it is.

HILDA. He consulted father this afternoon. I wonder what father thinks of him.

BOLETTA. Father told me that he's got a hardening of the lungs—or something of that sort. He won't last very long, father says.

HILDA. Is that what he told you? Well, that's exactly what I've been thinking.

BOLETTA. But for heaven's sake don't let him notice anything.

HILDA. Oh, how can you think I would? (*In a lower tone.*) There!—now Hans has managed to clamber up. Hans——! Can't you see by the look of him that his name is Hans?

BOLETTA (*whispers*). Do be good now! I advise you to.

(LYNGSTRAND *enters from the right, a parasol in his hand.*)

LYNGSTRAND. I must beg your pardon, young ladies, for not being able to keep up with you.

HILDA. You've got hold of a parasol now?

LYNGSTRAND. It's your mother's. She said I might use it for a stick, as I hadn't brought one with me.

BOLETTA. Are they still down there? Father and the others?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes. Your father went into the restaurant for a moment, and the others are sitting

outside listening to the music; but they'll come up by-and-by, your mother said.

HILDA (*who is standing looking at him*). I suppose you're very tired now?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I almost think I'm a little tired. I believe I must sit down a bit. (*He seats himself on a stone in front, to the right.*)

HILDA (*stands before him*). Do you know that there's to be dancing down by the band-stand.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I heard something of it.

HILDA. I suppose you're very fond of dancing?

BOLETTA (*who is going about picking small flowers amongst the heather*). Oh Hilda—let Mr. Lyngstrand get his breath.

LYNGSTRAND (*to* HILDA). Yes, Miss Hilda, I should like very much to dance—if only I could.

HILDA. Oh I see; you've never learnt?

LYNGSTRAND. No I haven't. But that wasn't what I meant. I meant that I can't dance on account of my chest.

HILDA. On account of that injury you spoke of?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, that's it.

HILDA. Does this injury make you at all unhappy?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh no, I can't say it does. (*Smiling.*) For I believe it's owing to it that everybody is so kind and friendly and helpful to me.

HILDA. Yes; and then it's not a bit serious?

LYNGSTRAND. No, not serious in the least. Your father seemed quite to agree with the other doctors as to that.

HILDA. And it will pass off directly you go abroad?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; it will pass off.

BOLETTA (*with flowers in her hand*). Look here, Mr. Lyngstrand, you must put this in your button-hole.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, a thousand thanks, Miss Wangel! You're really too kind.

HILDA (*looking down the hill to the right*). Here they are, coming up the path.

BOLETTA (*also looking down*). I hope they know where to turn off. No, there they're going the wrong way.

LYNGSTRAND (*rises*). I'll run down to the turning and call out to them.

HILDA. You'll have to call very loud then.

BOLETTA. No, you'd better not. You'll only tire yourself again.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, downhill it's so easy. (*He goes out to the right.*)

HILDA. Yes, downhill. (*Looks after him.*) Now he's jumping too! And it never occurs to him that he's got to come up again.

BOLETTA. Poor creature——

HILDA. If Lyngstrand were to propose to you, would you have him?

BOLETTA. Are you out of your senses?

HILDA. Oh I mean, of course, if he hadn't this injury—and if he weren't going to die so soon. Would you have him?

BOLETTA. I think *you'd* better have him.

HILDA. No, I'm bothered if I would. He hasn't a rap. He hasn't enough to live upon himself.

BOLETTA. Why are you always so much taken up with him then?

HILDA. Oh, that's only on account of his "injury."

BOLETTA. I've never noticed that you pity him a bit.

HILDA. No more I do. But it's so tempting to me——

BOLETTA. What is?

HILDA. To look at him and get him to say that it's not serious, and that he's going abroad and going to be an artist. He's perfectly convinced of all that, and as happy as possible about it. And nothing will come of it after all; nothing in the world; he won't live long enough. I find that so thrilling to think of.

BOLETTA. Thrilling!

HILDA. Yes. I say it's thrilling—I take that liberty.

BOLETTA. Fie Hilda, you're really a horrid child!

HILDA. Well, that's just what I mean to be—to spite her! (*Looks down.*) Ah, at last! Arnholm doesn't seem to enjoy climbing. (*Turns round.*) Oh, by-the-bye — what do you think I noticed about Arnholm while we were at dinner?

BOLETTA. What?

HILDA. Only think, he's beginning to turn bald—right on the top of his head.

BOLETTA. Oh rubbish! I'm sure he isn't.

HILDA. Yes, he is. And he has wrinkles here, round both his eyes. Good heavens, Boletta, how could you be so spoony on him when he was your tutor?

BOLETTA (*smiling*). Yes, can you understand it? I remember once shedding bitter tears because he said he thought Boletta an ugly name.

HILDA. Think of that! (*Looks down again.*) I say, look there!—There's "the lady from the sea" walking with him—not with father—and jabbering away to him. I wonder whether those two aren't a bit sweet on each other.

BOLETTA. You ought really to be ashamed of yourself. How dare you say such things about her? We were beginning to get on so well together——

HILDA. Oh, indeed!—Don't you believe it, my girl! I tell you we shall never get on well with her. She doesn't suit us, nor we her. Heaven knows what tempted father to drag her into the house!—I shouldn't wonder if she were to go mad on our hands some fine day.

BOLETTA. Mad? What makes you think such a thing?

HILDA. Oh, there would be nothing so wonderful about it. Didn't her mother go mad? She died mad, I know.

BOLETTA. Yes, I'd like to know what you don't poke your nose into. All I say is, don't go chattering about it. Be good now—for father's sake. Do you hear, Hilda?

(WANGEL, ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *come up from the right.*)

ELLIDA (*points away towards the background*). It lies out there.

ARNHOLM. Yes, of course; it must be in that direction.

ELLIDA. Out there lies the sea.

BOLETTA (*to* ARNHOLM). Don't you think it's pretty up here?

ARNHOLM. I should rather say grand—a glorious view!

WANGEL. I daresay you've never been up here before?

ARNHOLM. No, never. In my time I doubt if it was accessible. There wasn't even a footpath.

WANGEL. And no grounds laid out either. We've done all that in the last few years.

BOLETTA. Over there, on the Pilot's Point, the view is even grander.

WANGEL. Shall we go there, Ellida?

ELLIDA (*seats herself upon a stone to the right*). Thank you, I won't go. But you others ought to. I'll stay here in the meantime.

WANGEL. Very well; then I'll stay with you. The girls can do the honours for Arnholm.

BOLETTA. Do you care to come with us, Mr. Arnholm?

ARNHOLM. Yes, I should like to. Is there a path up there too?

BOLETTA. Oh yes; a good broad path.

HILDA. There's plenty of room for two people to go arm-in-arm.

ARNHOLM (*jestingly*). Is it possible, little Miss Hilda! (*To* BOLETTA.) Shall we two try if she's right?

BOLETTA (*repressing a smile*). Yes, if you like. Let us.

(*They go out to the left, arm-in-arm.*)

HILDA (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Shall we go too——

LYNGSTRAND. Arm-in-arm——?

HILDA. Why not? So far as I'm concerned——

LYNGSTRAND (*gives her his arm, and laughs with pleasure*). This is great fun, isn't it?

HILDA. Great fun——?

LYNGSTRAND. Why, it looks exactly as if we were engaged.

HILDA. I suppose you've never promenaded with a lady on your arm before, Mr. Lyngstrand.

(*They go out to the left.*)

WANGEL (*who is standing at the back, beside the landmark*). Dear Ellida, now we have a little time to ourselves——

ELLIDA. Yes, come and sit down beside me.

WANGEL (*seats himself*). It's so open and quiet here. Now let us have a little talk.

ELLIDA. What about?

WANGEL. About you; and about our relation to each other, Ellida. I see well enough that this state of things can't continue.

ELLIDA. What would you have in its place?

WANGEL. Full confidence, dear. To live together —as we did before.

ELLIDA. Oh, if we only could! But it's so utterly impossible!

WANGEL. I think I understand you. From certain things you've let fall now and then, I believe I do.

ELLIDA (*vehemently*). No you don't! Don't say that you understand——!

WANGEL. Oh yes. Yours is an upright nature, Ellida. You have a loyal heart.

ELLIDA. Yes, I have.

WANGEL. Any relation in which you can feel secure and happy must be a full and perfect one.

ELLIDA (*looking anxiously at him*). Well,—and then?

WANGEL. You are not fitted to be a man's second wife.

ELLIDA. What makes you think of that now?

WANGEL. The suspicion has often crossed my mind; but to-day I saw it clearly. The children's memorial display—you looked on me as a sort of accomplice.—Well yes; a man's memories are not to be wiped out—not mine, at all events. It's not in my nature.

ELLIDA. I know that. Oh, I know it so well.

WANGEL. But you're mistaken, for all that. It seems to you almost as though the children's mother were still alive. You feel her invisible presence in our midst. You think that my heart is equally divided between you and her. It is this idea that revolts you. You see, as it were, something immoral in our relation; and that is why you cannot, or will not, live with me as my wife.

ELLIDA (*rises*). Have you seen all this, Wangel? Seen through all this?

WANGEL. Yes, to-day I have at last seen through it—right to the bottom.

ELLIDA. Right to the bottom, you say. Oh, you mustn't think that.

WANGEL (*rises*). I know very well that there is more than this, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA (*apprehensively*). You know that there is more?

WANGEL. Yes. There is this: that you cannot endure your surroundings here. The mountains oppress you and weigh upon your spirits. There is not light enough for you here—the horizon is not wide enough—the air not strong and stimulating enough for you.

ELLIDA. You are quite right in that. Night and day, winter and summer, it is upon me—this irresistible home-sickness for the sea.

WANGEL. I know it well, dear Ellida. (*Lays his hand upon her head.*) And therefore the poor sick child must go to its own home again.

ELLIDA. How do you mean?

WANGEL. Quite literally. We will move.

ELLIDA. Move!

WANGEL. Yes. Out somewhere by the open sea,—to some place where you may find a real home, after your own heart.

ELLIDA. Oh my dear, you mustn't think of that! It's quite impossible. You could never live happily anywhere in the world but here.

WANGEL. That must be as it may. And besides—do you think I can live happily here—without you?

ELLIDA. But here I am; and here I will remain. Am I not yours?

WANGEL. *Are* you mine, Ellida?

ELLIDA. Oh, say no more of that scheme. Here you have all that you live and breathe for. Your whole life-work lies just here.

WANGEL. That must be as it may, I say. We will move from here—move seaward somewhere. My mind is made up beyond recall, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA. But what do you suppose we shall gain by that?

WANGEL. You will regain your health and peace of mind.

ELLIDA. I doubt it. But you yourself! Think of yourself too. What do you expect to gain?

WANGEL. I shall regain you, my dearest.

ELLIDA. But that you cannot do! No, no, you cannot, Wangel! That is just the terrible, the heart-breaking part of it.

WANGEL. That remains to be seen. If you are haunted by such thoughts here, then there's nothing for it but to get you away from here. And the sooner the better. My mind is made up beyond recall, I tell you.

ELLIDA. No! Rather than that.—Heaven help me—I will tell you everything straight out, exactly as it is.

WANGEL. Yes, yes—do!

ELLIDA. You shall not make yourself unhappy for my sake; especially as, after all, it would do no one any good.

WANGEL. You have promised to tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

ELLIDA. I will tell you as well as I can, and as far as I understand things.—Come here and sit by me.

(*They seat themselves upon the stones.*)

WANGEL. Well, Ellida? Well——?

ELLIDA. That day when you came out there and asked me if I could and would be yours—you spoke to me frankly and openly about your first marriage. It had been so happy, you said.

WANGEL. So it was.

ELLIDA. Yes, yes; I can well believe it, dear. That is not why I mention it now. I only want to remind you that I, on my side, was frank with you. I told you quite unreservedly that I had once in my life cared for somebody else. That it had come to—a sort of betrothal between us.

WANGEL. A sort of——?

ELLIDA. Yes, something of the kind. Well, it lasted a very short time. He went away; and afterwards I broke it off. All this I told you.

WANGEL. But, dear Ellida, why go back upon all this? After all, it doesn't concern me. I have never even asked you who it was.

ELLIDA. No, you have not. You are always so considerate to me.

WANGEL. Oh, in this case, I scarcely needed to be told his name.

ELLIDA. His name?

WANGEL. Out at Skioldvik and thereabouts there weren't many to choose from. Or rather, there was only one man——

ELLIDA. I suppose you think it was—Arnholm.

WANGEL. Yes, was it not?

ELLIDA. No.

WANGEL. It wasn't? Well then I'm certainly at a loss.

ELLIDA. Do you remember that in the late autumn one year a large American ship came into Skioldvik for repairs?

WANGEL. Yes, I remember it well. It was on board her that the captain was found murdered in his

cabin one morning. I remember going to make the post-mortem.

ELLIDA. Yes, you did.

WANGEL. It was the second mate who had killed him.

ELLIDA. No one can tell that! It was never proved.

WANGEL. There's no doubt about it. Why else should he have gone and drowned himself?

ELLIDA. He did not drown himself. He escaped in a vessel bound for the north.

WANGEL (*starts*). How do you know that?

ELLIDA (*with an effort*). Because, Wangel—because it was that second mate to whom I was—betrothed.

WANGEL (*starting up*). What do you say? Can this be possible?

ELLIDA. Yes,—it was to him.

WANGEL. But how in the world, Ellida——! How could you do such a thing! Go and engage yourself to such a man as that! An utter stranger! —What was his name?

ELLIDA. He called himself Friman[1] then. Afterwards, in his letters, he signed himself Alfred Johnston.

WANGEL. And where did he come from?

ELLIDA. From Finmark, he said. He was born over in Finland though. He had come across the frontier as a child, with his father I think.

WANGEL. He was a Quæn, then.

[1] Pronounce *Freeman*.

ELLIDA. Yes, that's what they're called.

WANGEL. What more do you know of him?

ELLIDA. Only that he went to sea very young, and that he had made long voyages.

WANGEL. Nothing else?

ELLIDA. No; we never talked about these things.

WANGEL. What did you talk about then?

ELLIDA. Chiefly about the sea.

WANGEL. Ah—! About the sea?

ELLIDA. About storm and calm. About dark nights at sea; and about the sea in the glittering sunshine, too. But we talked most about the whales, and the porpoises, and the seals that lie out upon the reefs and bask in the midday sun. And then we talked about the gulls and the eagles, and all the other sea-birds, you know. And—would you believe it?—when we talked of these things, it seemed to me as though both the sea-animals and the sea-birds were akin to him.

WANGEL. And you yourself——?

ELLIDA. Yes, I almost thought that I, too, was akin to all of them.

WANGEL. Yes, yes.—And that was how you came to betroth yourself to him?

ELLIDA. Yes; he said I must.

WANGEL. Must? Had you no will of your own?

ELLIDA. Not when he was near. Oh—afterwards it all seemed so utterly inexplicable to me.

WANGEL. Used you to see him often?

ELLIDA. No, not very often. He went over the lighthouse one day; that is how I came to know

him. And afterwards we used to meet occasionally. But then came this affair about the captain; and he had to go away.

WANGEL. Oh yes, let me hear about that!

ELLIDA. It was in the dusk of the early morning that I got a line from him. It said that I must come out to him at Bratthammer[1]—you know, the headland between the lighthouse and Skioldvik.

WANGEL. Yes, yes,—I know it well.

ELLIDA. I must come there immediately, he wrote, for he wanted to speak to me.

WANGEL. And you went?

ELLIDA. Yes; I could not help it. And then he told me that he had stabbed the captain in the night.

WANGEL. He told you himself! Said it straight out!

ELLIDA. Yes. But he had only done what was right and just, he said.

WANGEL. Right and just? What reason did he give, then, for stabbing him?

ELLIDA. He would not tell me the reason. He said it was not a thing for me to hear about.

WANGEL. And you believed him, on his bare word?

ELLIDA. Yes, I never thought of doubting him. Well, he had to go away, at all events. But when he was on the point of saying good-bye to me—no, you could never imagine what he did.

WANGEL. Well, tell me then.

ELLIDA. He took a key-ring out of his pocket, and

[1] Pronounce *Bratt-hammer*.

drew off his finger a ring he used to wear. Then he took from me a little ring I had, and these two he put together on the key-ring. And then he said that we two must wed ourselves with the sea.

WANGEL. Wed——?

ELLIDA. Yes, so he said. And then he flung the large ring and the two small ones as far as ever he could out to sea.

WANGEL. And you, Ellida? Did you agree to that?

ELLIDA. Yes, would you believe it, I thought then that it was all as it should be.—But, thank heaven, then he went away!

WANGEL. And when once he was away?

ELLIDA. Oh, you may be sure I soon came to my senses again. I saw how utterly stupid and meaningless the whole thing had been.

WANGEL. But you said something about letters. Did you hear from him afterwards?

ELLIDA. Yes, I heard from him. First, I got a line or two from Archangel. He said nothing but that he was going over to America; and he told me where to address an answer.

WANGEL. Did you write?

ELLIDA. Immediately. I said, of course, that all must be over between us—that he must never think of me again, as I meant never to think any more of him.

WANGEL. And did he write again, in spite of that?

ELLIDA. Yes, he wrote again.

WANGEL. And what was his answer to what you had said?

ELLIDA. Not a word. He wrote just as if I had never broken with him. He told me quite calmly that I must wait for him. When he was ready for me he would let me know, and then I was to come to him at once.

WANGEL. He would not release you?

ELLIDA. No. So I wrote again, almost word for word the same as before: only more strongly.

WANGEL. And did he give way then?

ELLIDA. Oh no, far from it. He wrote as calmly as before, and took no notice of my having broken with him. Then I saw it was useless, so I never wrote to him any more.

WANGEL. And didn't hear from him either?

ELLIDA. Yes, I have had three letters from him since. Once he wrote from California and once from China. The last letter I got from him was from Australia. He said he was going to the gold-mines; and since then I haven't heard from him.

WANGEL. That man must have had an abnormal power over you, Ellida.

ELLIDA. Oh yes, yes. That awful man!

WANGEL. But you mustn't think any more about it. Never! Promise me that, my dear, my precious Ellida! We will try another cure for you now—a fresher air than this of the inner fiord. The salt-laden, sweeping sea-breezes, dear! What do you say to that?

ELLIDA. Oh don't speak of it! Don't think of such a thing! It would not help me a bit! I know, I feel, that I should not be able to throw it off out there either.

WANGEL. To throw what off, dear,—what do you mean?

ELLIDA. I mean the awe of him. His unfathomable power over my soul——

WANGEL. But you *have* thrown it off! Long ago; when you broke with him. It is all over, long ago.

ELLIDA (*springs up*). No, that's just it: it's not over!

WANGEL. Not over!

ELLIDA. No, Wangel,—it is not over! And I'm afraid it never will be over. Never in this life.

WANGEL (*in a choked voice*). Do you mean to say that you have never in your heart of hearts been able to forget that strange man?

ELLIDA. I had forgotten him. But all at once he seemed to come again.

WANGEL. How long ago is that?

ELLIDA. It's about three years ago now, or a little more.—It was whilst—before the child was born.

WANGEL. Oh, then? In that case, Ellida—I begin to understand the matter.

ELLIDA. You are wrong, dear! This that has come over me—oh, I don't think it can ever be understood.

WANGEL (*looks at her, pained*). To think that for all these three years your heart has been given to another man. To another! Not to me,—but to another!

ELLIDA. Oh you utterly misunderstand me. I love no one but you.

WANGEL (*in a low tone*). How is it, then, that

for all that time you have refused to live with me as my wife?

ELLIDA. That is because of the dread I feel for the strange man.

WANGEL. Dread——?

ELLIDA. Yes, dread. A dread so awful as only the sea can instil. For now I must tell you, Wangel——

(*The young townspeople come back from the left, bow, and go out to the right. With them come* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND.)

BOLETTA (*as they pass by*). What! Still up here?

ELLIDA. Yes, it's so delightfully cool upon the heights.

ARNHOLM. For our part, we're going down to have a dance.

WANGEL. All right. We'll come down presently too.

HILDA. Good-bye for the present then.

ELLIDA. Mr. Lyngstrand—please wait a moment.

(LYNGSTRAND *stops.* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, *and* HILDA *go out to the right.*)

ELLIDA (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Are you going to dance too?

LYNGSTRAND. No, Mrs. Wangel, I don't think I dare.

ELLIDA. No, you ought to be careful. That weakness in your chest, you know—you haven't quite got over it yet.

LYNGSTRAND. Not thoroughly, no.

ELLIDA (*somewhat hesitatingly*). How long is it now since you made that voyage——?

LYNGSTRAND. When I received the injury?

ELLIDA. Yes, that voyage you were telling us about this morning.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh well, it'll be about—wait a bit—yes, it must be just three years ago.

ELLIDA. Three years?

LYNGSTRAND. Or a little more. We left America in February, and we were wrecked in March. We got into the equinoctial gales.

ELLIDA (*looking at* WANGEL). You see, that was the time——

WANGEL. But, my dear Ellida——?

ELLIDA. Well, don't let us detain you, Mr. Lyngstrand. Go, but don't dance.

LYNGSTRAND. No, I'll only look on.

(*He goes out to the right.*)

WANGEL. Dear Ellida, why did you cross-question him about that voyage?

ELLIDA. Johnston was in the same ship. Of that I am perfectly certain.

WANGEL. What makes you think so?

ELLIDA (*without answering*). He got to know, on board ship, that I had married some one else, whilst he was away. And then, at the very same moment, this came upon me!

WANGEL. This dread?

ELLIDA. Yes. Every now and then, I suddenly see him stand bodily before me, or rather a little to one side. He never looks at me; he is only there.

WANGEL. How does he appear to you?

ELLIDA. Just as I saw him last.

WANGEL. Ten years ago?

ELLIDA. Yes. Out at Bratthammer. I see his scarf-pin most distinctly of all, with a large, bluish-white pearl in it. That pearl is like a dead fish's eye. And it seems to glare at me.

WANGEL. Good God——! You are more ill than I thought; more ill than you yourself are aware of, Ellida.

ELLIDA. Yes, yes,—help me if you can! For I feel it closing round me more and more.

WANGEL. And you have been in this state for three whole years! You have suffered this secret anguish without confiding in me!

ELLIDA. Oh I could not! Not till now, when it became necessary for your own sake. If I had told you all this, I must also have told you—the unspeakable——

WANGEL. The unspeakable——?

ELLIDA (*evasively*). No, no, no! do not ask! Only one thing more, and I have done.—Wangel, how shall we fathom the mystery—of the child's eyes——?

WANGEL. My own dear Ellida, I assure you it was pure imagination on your part. The child had exactly the same eyes as other normal children.

ELLIDA. No, it had not! How could you help seeing it? The child's eyes changed colour with the sea. If the fiord lay in a sunny calm, the eyes were calm and sunny. And the same in storms. Oh, I saw it well enough, if you did not.

WANGEL (*humouring her*). Hm,—perhaps so. But even if it were? What then?

ELLIDA (*softly, and nearer to him*). I have seen eyes like that before.

WANGEL. When? And where——?

ELLIDA. Out at Bratthammer. Ten years ago.

WANGEL (*recoils a step*). What do you——!

ELLIDA (*whispers, trembling*). The child had the strange man's eyes.

WANGEL (*cries out involuntarily*). Ellida——!

ELLIDA (*clasps her hands over her head in despair*). Now you can surely understand why I never *will*,—never *dare* live with you as your wife!

(*She turns hastily and rushes down the hill to the right.*)

WANGEL (*hastens after her and calls*). Ellida! Ellida! My poor unhappy Ellida!

Act Third.

(*A remote part of* DR. WANGEL'S *garden. The place is damp, marshy, and overshadowed by large old trees. To the right is seen the edge of a stagnant pond. A low open fence divides the garden from the footpath and fiord in the background. In the furthest distance, beyond the fiord, mountain ranges rising into peaks. It is late afternoon, almost evening.*)

(BOLETTA *sits sewing upon a stone seat to the left. On the seat lie some books and a work-basket.* HILDA *and* LYNGSTRAND, *both with fishing-tackle, stand by the edge of the pond.*)

HILDA (*makes a sign to* LYNGSTRAND). Stand still! I see a big one there.

LYNGSTRAND (*looking*). Where is it?

HILDA (*points*). Can't you see—down there. And look! I declare there's another! (*Looks away through the trees.*) Ugh—there he comes to frighten them away!

BOLETTA (*looks up*). Who's coming?

HILDA. Your tutor, miss!

BOLETTA. My——?

HILDA. Yes; thank goodness he was never mine!

(ARNHOLM *comes forward amongst the trees on the right.*)

ARNHOLM. Are there fish in the pond now?

HILDA. Yes, there are some very old carp.

ARNHOLM. Ah, so the old carp are still alive?

HILDA. Yes; they're tough, I can tell you. But now we're going to put an end to some of them.

ARNHOLM. You ought rather to try the fiord.

LYNGSTRAND. No, the pond—the pond's what you'd call more romantic.

HILDA. Yes, it's more thrilling here.—Have you just been having a dip?

ARNHOLM. Precisely. I've come straight from the bathing-house.

HILDA. You kept within the enclosure?

ARNHOLM. Yes, I'm no great swimmer.

HILDA. Can you swim on your back?

ARNHOLM. No.

HILDA. I can. (*To* LYNGSTRAND.) Let's try over there on the other side.

(*They skirt the pond, out to the right.*)

ARNHOLM (*advances to* BOLETTA). You're all alone, Boletta?

BOLETTA. Oh yes, I generally am.

ARNHOLM. Isn't your mother in the garden?

BOLETTA. No, I think she's out walking with father.

ARNHOLM. How is she this afternoon?

BOLETTA. I don't quite know. I forgot to ask.

ARNHOLM. What are the books you have there?

BOLETTA. Oh, one's a botanical book, and the other is a geography.

ARNHOLM. Are you fond of that kind of reading?

BOLETTA. Yes, when I can get the time for it——. But the housekeeping is my first care.

ARNHOLM. But doesn't your mother—your step-mother—help you with that?

BOLETTA. No, it falls to me. I had to look after it during the two years father was alone; and so it has continued ever since.

ARNHOLM. But you're as fond as ever of reading?

BOLETTA. Yes, I read all the useful books I can get hold of. It's so nice to learn a little about the world. Here we live so entirely outside of everything,—or almost entirely.

ARNHOLM. No, my dear Boletta, don't say that.

BOLETTA. But I do say so. I don't see much difference between our life and that of the carp in the pond there. They have the fiord close beside them, where the great free shoals of fish sweep out and in. But the poor tame house-fishes know nothing of all that; and they can never join in.

ARNHOLM. I don't think it would suit them at all if they escaped into the fiord.

BOLETTA. Oh, I don't think that would matter much.

ARNHOLM. Besides, you can't say that you're so utterly out of the world here. Not in summer at all events. Nowadays this is a sort of local centre in the life of the world—a point of convergence for many passing streams.

BOLETTA (*smiling*). Oh, you're in the passing stream yourself; it's easy for you to make game of us.

ARNHOLM. I make game——? What puts that into your head?

BOLETTA. Why, all this about a centre and a point of convergence for the life of the world, is simply what you've heard people say in the town; they're always talking like that.

ARNHOLM. Yes, frankly, I've noticed as much.

BOLETTA. But there's really not a word of truth in it—not for us who live here constantly. What is it to us that the great foreign world passes our doors on its way to the midnight sun? We cannot join in the stream. There's no midnight sun for us. Oh no; we must be content to linger our lives out here in our carp-pond.

ARNHOLM (*seats himself beside her*). Tell me, dear Boletta—I wonder if there isn't something or other,—some particular thing I mean—that you're longing for here at home?

BOLETTA. Well, perhaps there may be.

ARNHOLM. Then what is it? What are you longing for?

BOLETTA. Chiefly to get away.

ARNHOLM. That before everything?

BOLETTA. Yes. And next to learn a little more; to get really to know something about things in general.

ARNHOLM. When I used to read with you, your father often said that he would let you go to college.

BOLETTA. Oh yes, poor father,—he says so many things. But when it comes to the point, then——. There's no real energy in father.

ARNHOLM. No, unfortunately—I suppose there isn't. But have you ever talked to him about this? Put serious pressure on him, I mean.

BOLETTA. No, I can't say I have.

ARNHOLM. But, you know, you really ought to before it's too late, Boletta. Why don't you?

BOLETTA. Oh, because there's no real energy in

me either, I suppose. I probably take after father in that.

ARNHOLM. Hm—I wonder whether you don't do yourself injustice there?

BOLETTA. Oh no, I'm sorry to say. And then father has so little time to think about me and my future—and not much inclination. He puts things of that sort aside as much as he can; he's so entirely taken up with Ellida——

ARNHOLM. With whom——? How——?

BOLETTA. I mean that he and my step-mother——. (*Breaking off.*) Father and mother lead a life apart, you see.

ARNHOLM. Well, so much the more reason for you to see about getting away.

BOLETTA. Yes, but I don't feel as if I had the right to go away—to leave father.

ARNHOLM. But, my dear Boletta, you'll have to leave him some time, in any case; and I should say the sooner the better.

BOLETTA. Yes, I suppose there's nothing else for it. I must think of myself too, and try to make a position of some sort. When once father is gone I shall have no one to depend on.—But poor father,—I dread the thought of leaving him.

ARNHOLM. Dread——?

BOLETTA. Yes, for his own sake.

ARNHOLM. But, bless me, what about your step-mother? She will still be with him.

BOLETTA. Yes, that's true. But she's not at all fitted for all that mother did so well. There are no end of things she doesn't see, or perhaps won't see,—

or trouble herself about. I don't know which way to put it.

ARNHOLM. Hm,—I think I understand what you mean.

BOLETTA. Poor father,—he's weak in certain ways. I daresay you've noticed that yourself. You see he hasn't enough business to fill up his whole time; and then she has no idea of being any support to him.—Of course that's partly his own fault, though.

ARNHOLM. How so?

BOLETTA. Oh, father always likes to see cheerful faces around him; there must be sunshine and contentment in the house, he says. So I'm afraid he often lets her have medicine that does her no good in the long run.

ARNHOLM. Do you really think so?

BOLETTA. Yes, I can't get rid of the thought. She's so strange at times. (*Vehemently.*) But now isn't it hard that I should have to hang on at home here! It's really no earthly use to father; and I have duties towards myself too, I should think.

ARNHOLM. I'll tell you what, my dear Boletta,—we must talk all this over more thoroughly.

BOLETTA. Oh, that won't help much; I daresay I was created to pass my life here in the carp-pond.

ARNHOLM. Not at all. It depends entirely upon yourself.

BOLETTA (*eagerly*). Do you think so?

ARNHOLM. Yes, believe me; it lies wholly and solely in your own hands.

BOLETTA. Oh, if it only did——! Will you put in a good word for me with father?

ARNHOLM. I'll do that too. But first of all I want to speak frankly and unreservedly to you yourself, my dear Boletta. (*Looks out to the left.*) Hush! Let no one notice anything; we'll finish our talk by-and-by.

(ELLIDA *enters from the left. She is without her hat, but has a light shawl thrown over her head and shoulders.*)

ELLIDA (*with forced animation*). How nice it is here! How delightful!

ARNHOLM (*rising*). Have you been out walking?

ELLIDA. Yes, a long, long splendid walk with Wangel; and now we're going out for a sail.

BOLETTA. Won't you sit down?

ELLIDA. No thank you, I won't sit.

BOLETTA (*moving along the bench*). There's plenty of room.

ELLIDA (*walking about*). No no no, I won't sit; I won't sit.

ARNHOLM. Your walk has surely done you good; it seems to have livened you up.

ELLIDA. Oh, I feel so perfectly well! I feel so unspeakably happy! So safe! So safe—— (*Looks out to the left.*) What large steamer is that coming in?

BOLETTA (*rises and looks out*). It must be the big English boat.

ARNHOLM. They're mooring her to the buoy. Does she generally stop here?

BOLETTA. Only for half-an-hour; she goes farther up the fiord.

ELLIDA. And then outward again—to-morrow;

out on the great open sea; right over the sea. Think of going with her! If one only could! If one only could!

ARNHOLM. Have you never been a long sea-voyage, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA. Never at all; only little trips in the fiords.

BOLETTA (*with a sigh*). Oh no, we have to put up with the dry land.

ARNHOLM. Well, at any rate, it's our natural element.

ELLIDA. No, I don't think so at all.

ARNHOLM. Not dry land?

ELLIDA. No, I don't believe it. I believe that if men had only accustomed themselves from the first to live their life on the sea—or even in the sea—we should by this time have been far more perfect than we are;—both better and happier.

ARNHOLM. Do you really believe that?

ELLIDA. Yes, I feel sure of it. I have often talked of this with Wangel.

ARNHOLM. Well, and he——?

ELLIDA. Oh, he thinks there may be something in it.

ARNHOLM (*joking*). Well, who knows? But what's done is done. We have once for all taken the wrong turning and become land-animals instead of sea-animals. I'm afraid it's too late now to rectify the error.

ELLIDA. Yes, that's a deplorable truth. And I believe people have an instinctive feeling of it themselves—it haunts them like a secret sorrow and

regret. Believe me, this lies at the very root of the melancholy of mankind. I'm sure it does.

ARNHOLM. But my dear Mrs. Wangel,—I've never noticed that people *are* so profoundly melancholy. I should say, on the contrary, that most people take life cheerfully and lightly—with a great, calm, unconscious joy.

ELLIDA. Oh no, that is not so. That joy—it's just like our joy in the long light summer days. It has in it the foreboding of the darkness to come. And this foreboding casts its shadow over the joy of mankind,—just as the driving scud casts its shadow over the fiord. There it lies all blue and shining; and then all of a sudden——

BOLETTA. You shouldn't give the rein to such sad thoughts. You were so bright and cheerful a moment ago——

ELLIDA. Yes yes, so I was. Oh this—it's so stupid of me. (*Looks uneasily around.*) If only Wangel would come down here. He promised me so faithfully; and yet he doesn't come. He must have forgotten. Dear Mr. Arnholm, won't you go and find him for me.

ARNHOLM. Yes, with pleasure.

ELLIDA. Tell him that he really must come at once; for now I can't see him——

ARNHOLM. Not see him——?

ELLIDA. Oh, you don't understand me. When he's not there, I often can't remember what he looks like; and then it seems as though I'd utterly lost him.—It's so terribly painful. Do go!

(*She wanders over in the direction of the pond.*)

BOLETTA (*to* ARNHOLM). I will go with you; you don't know——

ARNHOLM. Oh don't trouble; I shall manage——

BOLETTA (*in an undertone*). No no, I'm uneasy. I'm afraid he's on board the steamer.

ARNHOLM. Afraid?

BOLETTA. Yes, he generally goes to see if there's any one he knows among the passengers; and there's a refreshment bar on board——

ARNHOLM. Ah! Come along then.

(*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*)

(ELLIDA *stands awhile gazing into the pond. From time to time she talks softly and disconnectedly to herself.*)

(*Outside on the footpath, beyond the garden fence, a* STRANGER *in travelling dress enters from the left. He has bushy reddish hair and beard, wears a Scotch cap, and has a travelling-bag slung across his shoulder by a strap.*)

THE STRANGER (*walks slowly alongside the fence, and looks into the garden. When he sees* ELLIDA *he stops, looks intently and searchingly at her, and says softly:*) Good evening, Ellida!

ELLIDA (*turns round and calls out*). Oh my dear—have you come at last!

THE STRANGER. Yes, at last.

ELLIDA (*looks at him, astonished and apprehensive.*) Who are you? Are you looking for some one here?

THE STRANGER. You know I am.

ELLIDA (*in surprise*). What is this! How strangely you speak to me! For whom are you looking?

THE STRANGER. I am looking for you, of course.

ELLIDA (*starts*). Ah——! (*Gazes at him a moment, shrinks violently backwards, and breaks out into a half-smothered shriek.*) The eyes!—The eyes!

THE STRANGER. Well, are you beginning to recognise me at last? I knew you at once, Ellida.

ELLIDA. The eyes! Don't look at me like that! I will call for help!

THE STRANGER. Hush, hush! Don't be afraid. I won't harm you.

ELLIDA (*holds her hands over her eyes*). Don't look at me like that, I say!

THE STRANGER (*leans his arms upon the garden fence*). I came with the English steamer.

ELLIDA (*glances shrinkingly at him*). What do you want with me?

THE STRANGER. I promised I would come again, as soon as I could——

ELLIDA. Go! Go away again! Never—never come here any more! I wrote to you that all must be over between us! All! You know I did!

THE STRANGER (*imperturbably, without answering*). I wanted to come to you sooner, but I could not. At last I saw my way; and here I am, Ellida.

ELLIDA. What do you want with me? What are you thinking of? What have you come here for?

THE STRANGER. You know quite well that I have come to fetch you.

ELLIDA (*shrinking back in terror*). To fetch me! Is *that* what you intend?

THE STRANGER. Yes, of course.

ELLIDA. But surely you know that I am married!

THE STRANGER. Yes, I know it.

ELLIDA. And yet——! In spite of that, you have come to—to—fetch me!

THE STRANGER. Yes, you see I have.

ELLIDA (*seizes hold of her head with her two hands*). Oh this horror——! Oh the awe of it, the awe of it——!

THE STRANGER. Perhaps you don't want to come!

ELLIDA (*beside herself*). Don't look at me like that!

THE STRANGER. Don't you want to come, I ask?

ELLIDA. No, no, no! I will not! Never to the end of time! I will not, I say. I neither can, nor will! (*Lower.*) I *dare* not.

THE STRANGER (*climbs over the fence and comes into the garden*). Very well then, Ellida,—let me just say one single thing before I go.

ELLIDA (*wishes to escape, but cannot. She stands as if paralysed with fear, and supports herself against a tree-stem near the pond*). Do not touch me! Do not come near me! Stay where you are! Do not touch me, I say!

THE STRANGER (*cautiously, coming a step or two towards her*). You mustn't be so frightened of me, Ellida.

ELLIDA (*puts her hands before her eyes*). Do not look at me like that!

THE STRANGER. Don't be afraid, don't be afraid.

(DOCTOR WANGEL *comes through the garden from the left.*)

WANGEL (*before he has quite emerged from among the trees*). Well, I've kept you waiting a nice time.

ELLIDA (*rushes to him, clings fast to his arm and cries:*) Oh Wangel,—save me! Save me—if you can!

WANGEL. Ellida,—what in heaven's name——!

ELLIDA. Save me, Wangel! Don't you see him? There he stands!

WANGEL (*looks at him*). That man there? (*Goes towards him.*) May I ask who you are, and why you have come into this garden?

THE STRANGER (*indicates* ELLIDA *by a nod*). I want to speak to *her*.

WANGEL. Indeed. Then I suppose it was you——? (*To* ELLIDA.) I hear a stranger called at the house, asking for you.

THE STRANGER. Yes, it was I.

WANGEL. And what do you want with my wife? (*Turns.*) Do you know him, Ellida?

ELLIDA (*softly, wringing her hands*). Do I know him! Yes, yes, yes!

WANGEL (*hastily*). Well?

ELLIDA. Oh, it is *he*, Wangel! It is he himself! He,—you know——!

WANGEL. What? What do you say? (*Turns.*) Are you that Johnston, who was——?

THE STRANGER. Well, you can call me Johnston if you like. It's not my name though.

WANGEL. Isn't it?

THE STRANGER. Not now.

WANGEL. And what can you want with my wife? For of course you know that the lighthouse-keeper's daughter has been married for years. And you must also know who her husband is.

THE STRANGER. I have known that any time these three years.

ELLIDA (*eagerly*). How did you get to know it?

THE STRANGER. I was on my way home to you. I came across an old newspaper from these parts; and in it was the announcement of your marriage.

ELLIDA (*looking straight before her*). My marriage——. So it was that——

THE STRANGER. It affected me strangely. For that with the rings—that was a marriage too, Ellida.

ELLIDA (*puts her hands before her face*). Oh——!

WANGEL. How dare you——?

THE STRANGER. Had you forgotten it?

ELLIDA (*cries out, as though she felt his look*). Don't stand looking at me like that!

WANGEL (*places himself in front of him*). Be so good as to address yourself to me, and not to her. Briefly now—since you understand the situation—what do you propose to do here? Why do you come here and seek out my wife?

THE STRANGER. I had promised Ellida that I would come to her as soon as I could.

WANGEL. Ellida——! Again!

THE STRANGER. And Ellida had promised faithfully to wait for me till I came.

WANGEL. I observe that you call my wife by her first name. That sort of familiarity is not usual here.

THE STRANGER. I know that very well. But as she belongs first of all to *me*——

WANGEL. To you! Still——!

ELLIDA (*shrinks behind* WANGEL). Oh——! He will never set me free!

WANGEL. To you! You say she belongs to you!

THE STRANGER. Has she told you about the two rings? My ring and Ellida's?

WANGEL. Yes, certainly. But what then? She broke it off again afterwards. You got her letters, so you cannot allege ignorance.

THE STRANGER. Ellida and I agreed that the affair of the rings was to have the full force and validity of a marriage.

ELLIDA. But I refuse, I tell you! Never in this world will I have anything more to do with you! Do not look at me like that! I will not, I tell you!

WANGEL. You must be out of your senses if you think you can come here and establish a claim upon such child's-play as that.

THE STRANGER. That's true. In the way you mean, I have certainly no claim upon her.

WANGEL. What do you want to do then? You can't imagine that you can take her from me by force,—against her own will!

THE STRANGER. No. What would be the use of that? If Ellida is to be mine, she must come of her own free will.

ELLIDA (*starts and cries out*). Of my own free will——!

WANGEL. And can you suppose——!

ELLIDA (*to herself*). My own free will——!

WANGEL. You must be out of your mind. Go away! Go away! We have nothing more to do with you.

THE STRANGER (*looks at his watch*). It will soon be time for me to go on board again. (*Advances a*

step.) Well well, Ellida; now I have fulfilled my obligations. (*Still nearer.*) I have kept the word I gave you.

ELLIDA (*imploringly, shrinking away*). Oh, do not touch me!

THE STRANGER. I give you till to-morrow night to think it over——

WANGEL. There is nothing to think over. See that you take yourself off!

THE STRANGER (*still to* ELLIDA). I am now going up the fiord in the steamer; to-morrow night I shall return, and then I will see you again. You must wait for me here in the garden; for I prefer to settle the matter with you alone. You understand.

ELLIDA (*softly and trembling*). Oh, do you hear that, Wangel?

WANGEL. Don't be alarmed. We shall find means to prevent this visit.

THE STRANGER. Good-bye for the present, Ellida. To-morrow night then.

ELLIDA (*entreatingly*). Oh no, no,—do not come to-morrow night! Never come again!

THE STRANGER. And if by that time you should have made up your mind to come with me over the sea——

ELLIDA. Oh, do not look at me like that——

THE STRANGER. I merely want you to understand that in that case you must be ready to start.

WANGEL. Go into the house, Ellida.

ELLIDA. I cannot. Oh, help me! Save me, Wangel!

THE STRANGER. You must remember this, that

if you don't come with me to-morrow, it is all over.

ELLIDA (*looks at him, trembling*). Would it be all over? For ever——?

THE STRANGER (*with a nod*). What you do can never be undone, Ellida! I shall never return to this country; you will never see me any more, nor hear from me either. I shall be as though dead and gone from you for evermore.

ELLIDA (*breathes uneasily*). Oh——!

THE STRANGER. So think carefully what you do. Good-bye. (*He climbs over the fence, stops, and says:*) Yes, Ellida,—be ready to start to-morrow night; I will come and fetch you.

(*He goes slowly and calmly along the footpath and out to the right.*)

ELLIDA (*looks after him a while*). Of my own free will, he said! Think of that—he said that I must go with him of my own free will.

WANGEL. Compose yourself. He's gone now, and you shall never see him again.

ELLIDA. Oh, how can you say that? He's coming again to-morrow night.

WANGEL. Let him come; I will see that he does not meet you.

ELLIDA (*shakes her head*). Oh Wangel, don't think that you can prevent him.

WANGEL. Yes I can, dearest—rely upon me.

ELLIDA (*musing, without listening to him*). When he has been here—to-morrow night—— And when he has gone away in the steamer over the sea——

WANGEL. Well, what then?

ELLIDA. I wonder whether he will never—never come again.

WANGEL. No, dear Ellida, of that you may be absolutely certain. What could he do here after that? He has heard now from your own lips that you won't have anything to do with him; that concludes the matter.

ELLIDA (*to herself*). To-morrow then—or never.

WANGEL. And even if he should take it into his head to come again——

ELLIDA (*excitedly*). What then——?

WANGEL. Why, we know how to render him harmless.

ELLIDA. Oh, don't think that.

WANGEL. We know what to do, I say! If you can't get peace for him in any other way, then he shall answer for the murder of the captain.

ELLIDA (*vehemently*). No, no, no——! Never that! We know nothing about the murder of the captain! Absolutely nothing!

WANGEL. We know nothing! Why, he himself confessed it to you!

ELLIDA. No, nothing about that! If you say anything I will deny it. He shall not be caged! His place is out yonder on the open sea. That is his home!

WANGEL (*looks at her and says slowly:*) Ah, Ellida—Ellida!

ELLIDA (*clings to him passionately*). Oh dear one, faithful one—save me from that man!

WANGEL (*gently disengaging himself*). Come! Come with me!

(LYNGSTRAND *and* HILDA, *both with fishing-tackle, appear from the right beside the pond.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*goes rapidly towards* ELLIDA). Oh what do you think, Mrs. Wangel—I have something wonderful to tell you!

WANGEL. What is it?

LYNGSTRAND. Just fancy, we have seen the American!

WANGEL. The American?

HILDA. Yes, I saw him too.

LYNGSTRAND. He went round by the back of the garden, and then on board the big English steamer.

WANGEL. Where have you known that man?

LYNGSTRAND. I was at sea with him once. I was convinced he was drowned; and here he appears as large as life.

WANGEL. Have you any further knowledge of him?

LYNGSTRAND. No; but I'm sure he has come back to be revenged on his faithless wife.

WANGEL. What do you mean?

HILDA. Mr. Lyngstrand's going to work him into a group he's composing.

WANGEL. I don't understand a word——

ELLIDA. You shall hear all about it by-and-by.

(ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *enter from the left along the footpath outside the garden fence.*)

BOLETTA (*to those in the garden*). Come and look! The English steamer is just going up the fiord.

(*A large steamer glides slowly past at some distance.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*to* HILDA, *near the garden fence*). He's sure to descend upon her to-night.

HILDA (*nods*). Upon his faithless wife—yes.

LYNGSTRAND. Fancy,—just at midnight.

HILDA. Oh that must be so thrilling.

ELLIDA (*looking after the ship*). To-morrow then——

WANGEL. And after that, never again.

ELLIDA (*softly and trembling*). Oh Wangel—save me from myself!

WANGEL (*looks anxiously at her*). Ellida! my instinct tells me—there is something behind all this.

ELLIDA. All that allures me is behind it.

WANGEL. All that allures——?

ELLIDA. That man is like the sea.

(*She goes slowly and in deep thought through the garden out to the left.* WANGEL *walks uneasily by her side and observes her curiously.*)

Act Fourth.

(*Garden-room at* DR. WANGEL'S. *Doors right and left. In the back, between the two windows, an open glass door leading out to the veranda. A portion of the garden is seen below. A sofa and table in front on the left. To the right a piano, and further back a large flower-stand. In the middle of the floor a round table with chairs about it. On the table, a rose-tree in bloom, and other plants in pots around. It is forenoon.*)

(BOLETTA *is seated on the sofa by the table, left, working at a piece of embroidery.* LYNGSTRAND *sits on a chair at the upper end of the table.* BALLESTED *is seated in the garden painting.* HILDA *stands beside him, looking on.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*sits silent awhile with his arms on the table, watching* BOLETTA *at work*). It must be very difficult to sew edging like that, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA. Oh no, it's not so difficult, if only you're careful to count right——

LYNGSTRAND. Count? Have you to count?

BOLETTA. Yes, the stitches. Look here.

LYNGSTRAND. Why so you must! Fancy! It's almost a kind of art. Can you design too?

BOLETTA. Oh yes, when I have a copy before me.

LYNGSTRAND. Not unless?

BOLETTA. No, not unless.

LYNGSTRAND. Then it's not really an art after all.

BOLETTA. No, it's at best a—knack.

LYNGSTRAND. But I should think, now, that you could probably *learn* art?

BOLETTA. Although I have no turn for it?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, in spite of that—if you could be always with a real artist——

BOLETTA. Do you think I could learn from him?

LYNGSTRAND. I don't mean "learn" in the ordinary sense. But I think it would come to you by degrees—by a sort of miracle, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA. That's a strange idea.

LYNGSTRAND (*after a pause*). Have you thought much—I mean—have you thought at all deeply and seriously about marriage, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA (*glances at him*). About——? No.

LYNGSTRAND. I have.

BOLETTA. Indeed; have you?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes. I very often think about things of that sort; and particularly about marriage. And then I've read a good deal on the subject too. I think marriage may be called a sort of miracle: the woman is transformed, as it were, by degrees, and comes to resemble her husband.

BOLETTA. Acquires his interests, you mean?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, just so!

BOLETTA. Well, but what about his abilities?—his talent and skill?

LYNGSTRAND. Hm — well — I wonder whether they too wouldn't——

BOLETTA. Then do you think that what a man

has mastered by reading, or by thought, can be passed on in this way to his wife?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, that too; by degrees; as if by a miracle. But of course I know this could only happen in a marriage that is faithful, and loving, and really happy.

BOLETTA. Has it never occurred to you that perhaps a husband might be thus absorbed into his wife? Come to resemble her, I mean.

LYNGSTRAND. A husband? No, I never thought of that.

BOLETTA. But why not the one as well as the other?

LYNGSTRAND. No; a man has his vocation to live for, you know. And that's what makes a man so strong and resolute, Miss Wangel. He has his life-work.

BOLETTA. Every man?

LYNGSTRAND. Oh no. I was thinking chiefly of artists.

BOLETTA. Do you think it right for an artist to marry?

LYNGSTRAND. Most certainly; if he can find some one he really loves——

BOLETTA. Even then it seems to me that he should rather live for his art alone.

LYNGSTRAND. Of course he must; but he can quite well do that even if he marries.

BOLETTA. What about the woman then?

LYNGSTRAND. The woman? Which woman——?

BOLETTA. The woman he marries. What is she to live for?

LYNGSTRAND. She too must live for his art. I should think that must be such happiness for a woman.

BOLETTA. Hm,—I don't know so much——

LYNGSTRAND. Oh yes, Miss Wangel, believe me. It's not only all the honour and glory she enjoys through him; that, I think, is almost the smallest part of it. But that she can help him to create,—that she can lighten his labour by being ever at his side, and tending him, and making life thoroughly comfortable and pleasant for him. It seems to me that must be such perfect bliss for a woman.

BOLETTA. Oh, you don't realise how selfish you are!

LYNGSTRAND. Am *I* selfish? Good Heavens——! Oh, if you only knew me a little better——. (*Bends forward towards her.*) Miss Wangel, when I am gone,—and I shall be soon——

BOLETTA (*looks at him sympathetically*). Oh don't get such melancholy thoughts into your head.

LYNGSTRAND. I don't see that it's so very melancholy.

BOLETTA. How do you mean?

LYNGSTRAND. I shall be starting in about a month, first for home, and soon afterwards for the south.

BOLETTA. Oh, I see. Yes, yes.

LYNGSTRAND. Will you think of me now and then, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA. Yes, gladly.

LYNGSTRAND (*joyfully*). Oh, promise me that!

BOLETTA. Yes, I promise.

LYNGSTRAND. Solemnly, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA. Solemnly. (*Changing her tone.*) Oh, but what's the use of all this? Nothing will ever come of it!

LYNGSTRAND. How can you say that? It would be such a joy to me to know that you were at home here thinking of me.

BOLETTA. Well, but what then?

LYNGSTRAND. I don't quite know what might happen——

BOLETTA. Nor I. So many things stand in the way; every possible thing stands in the way, it seems to me.

LYNGSTRAND. Oh, some miracle or other might happen. A happy turn of fate—or something of that sort. For I'm convinced that fortune is on my side.

BOLETTA (*with animation*). Yes, isn't it! Don't you think so?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I'm perfectly convinced of it. And then—in a few years—when I come home again as a celebrated sculptor, well off and in robust health——

BOLETTA. Yes, yes; let us hope you will.

LYNGSTRAND. You may be confident of it—if only you think faithfully and warmly of me whilst I am away in the South. And that you've promised to do.

BOLETTA. Yes, I have. (*Shakes her head.*) But nothing will ever come of this, all the same.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, Miss Boletta, this at least will come of it, that I shall make all the easier and quicker progress with my group.

BOLETTA. Do you think so?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I feel it within me. And I think it will be stimulating for you too,—here in this out-of-the-way place—to know that you are, as it were, helping me to create.

BOLETTA (*looks at him*). Well—but you, on your side?

LYNGSTRAND. I——?

BOLETTA (*looks out towards the garden*). Hush! Let us talk of something else; here comes Mr. Arnholm.

(ARNHOLM *is seen in the garden, on the left. He stops and speaks with* BALLESTED *and* HILDA.)

LYNGSTRAND. Are you fond of your old teacher, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA. Am I fond of him?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I mean do you like him?

BOLETTA. Oh yes, I do indeed; he's such a good friend and adviser. And he's always so helpful whenever he has the chance.

LYNGSTRAND. Isn't it strange that he has never married?

BOLETTA. Do you think it so strange?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; they say he's well off.

BOLETTA. I suppose he is. But I fancy it isn't so easy for him to find any one who will have him.

LYNGSTRAND. Why?

BOLETTA. Oh, he has been the teacher of nearly every girl he knows. He says so himself.

LYNGSTRAND. Why, what does that matter?

BOLETTA. Why, bless me, one doesn't marry a man who has been one's teacher!

LYNGSTRAND. Don't you think a girl could possibly love her teacher?

BOLETTA. Not after she's quite grown up.

LYNGSTRAND. Dear me! how odd!

BOLETTA (*warningly*). Hush, hush!

(BALLESTED, *who has meanwhile collected his things, carries them out through the garden to the right.* HILDA *helps him.* ARNHOLM *comes up into the veranda and enters the room.*)

ARNHOLM. Good morning, my dear Boletta. Good morning, Mr.—— Mr.—— hm!

(*He looks annoyed and nods coldly to* LYNGSTRAND, *who rises and bows.*)

BOLETTA (*rises and goes to* ARNHOLM). Good morning, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM. How are you all here to-day?

BOLETTA. Thanks, very well.

ARNHOLM. Has your step-mother gone to bathe to-day again?

BOLETTA. No, she's up in her room.

ARNHOLM. Not quite well?

BOLETTA. I don't know. She has locked herself in.

ARNHOLM. Hm—has she?

LYNGSTRAND. I suppose Mrs. Wangel was very much alarmed by the American yesterday.

ARNHOLM. What do *you* know about it?

LYNGSTRAND. I told Mrs. Wangel that I had seen him in the flesh, going up behind the garden.

ARNHOLM. Oh indeed.

BOLETTA (*to* ARNHOLM). You and father sat up late last night, didn't you?

ARNHOLM. Yes, pretty late. We had an important question to discuss.

BOLETTA. Did you get in a word with him about me and my affairs?

ARNHOLM. No, my dear Boletta. I couldn't manage it; he was so absorbed in something else.

BOLETTA (*sighs*). Ah yes,—he always is.

ARNHOLM (*looking significantly at her*). But you and I are to have another talk about these things, presently.—Where is your father now? Has he gone out?

BOLETTA. I think he must be down at the surgery. I'll go and fetch him.

ARNHOLM. No thank you, don't do that. I would rather go down to him.

BOLETTA (*listening to the left*). Wait a moment, Mr. Arnholm. I think I hear father coming downstairs. Yes. He must have been up attending to her.

(DOCTOR WANGEL *enters by the door on the left.*)

WANGEL (*holds out his hand to* ARNHOLM). Ah, my dear friend, are you here already? It's good of you to come so early; I want very much to have another talk with you.

BOLETTA (*to* LYNGSTRAND). Shall we join Hilda in the garden for a little while?

LYNGSTRAND. With all the pleasure in life, Miss Wangel.

(*He and* BOLETTA *go down into the garden, and out among the trees in the background.*)

ARNHOLM (*who has been following them with his eyes, turns to* WANGEL). Do you know much about that young man?

WANGEL. No, very little.

ARNHOLM. Then do you like him to be so much with the girls?

WANGEL. Is he much with them? I really hadn't noticed it.

ARNHOLM. Don't you think you ought to keep your eye on that sort of thing?

WANGEL. Yes, no doubt you're right. But, bless my soul, what's a poor fellow to do? The girls have got so accustomed to look after themselves; they won't be guided either by me or by Ellida.

ARNHOLM. Not even by her?

WANGEL. No. And besides I can't expect her to interfere in such matters; it's not at all in her line. (*Breaking off.*) But that wasn't what we were going to talk about. Tell me—have you thought it over again?—all that I was telling you last night?

ARNHOLM. I have thought of nothing else ever since we parted.

WANGEL. And what should you say I ought to do?

ARNHOLM. My dear Doctor, I say that you, as a physician, ought to know better than I.

WANGEL. Oh, if you only knew how difficult it is for a physician to form a valid judgment in the case of a patient he loves so dearly! And this is no common disorder either—no case for an ordinary physician, or for ordinary remedies.

ARNHOLM. How is she to-day?

WANGEL. I have just been up to see her, and she appeared to me quite calm. But in all her moods there seems to be something in the background, that I cannot possibly fathom. And then she's so changeable—so incalculable—so subject to sudden caprices.

ARNHOLM. No doubt that's due to her morbid state of mind.

WANGEL. Not entirely. The germ of it all is innate in her. Ellida belongs to the sea-folk; that is the thing.

ARNHOLM. What do you mean precisely, my dear Doctor?

WANGEL. Have you not noticed that the people out by the open sea are like a race apart? They seem almost to live the life of the sea itself. You can trace its billowing—and its ebb and flow too—both in their thoughts and in their feelings. And they never bear transplantation. Oh, I ought to have thought of it sooner. It was a positive sin against Ellida to take her away from the sea and bring her in here!

ARNHOLM. Have you come to think so of late?

WANGEL. Yes, more and more; but I ought to have known it from the first. Oh, I did really know it then too, but I did not acknowledge it to myself. You see, I loved her so; and therefore I thought first of myself. So utterly and inexcusably selfish was I then!

ARNHOLM. Hm,—I'm afraid every man is a trifle selfish under those circumstances. But I can't say I've noticed that vice in you, Dr. Wangel.

WANGEL (*wandering uneasily up and down*). Oh

yes! And I have been so since, as well. I'm so much, much older than she; I ought to have been to her like a father and a guide in one. I ought to have done my best to develop and clarify her intellectual life. But unfortunately it never came to anything. I haven't had energy enough, you see! And in fact I preferred to have her just as she was. But then she got worse and worse, and I was at my wits' end to know what to do. (*Lower.*) That's why I turned to you in my perplexity, and asked you to come to us.

ARNHOLM (*looks at him in astonishment*). What! Was that why you wrote to me?

WANGEL. Yes; but don't say anything about it.

ARNHOLM. My dear Doctor,—what in the world —what good did you suppose I could do? I don't understand.

WANGEL. No, of course you don't; I had got upon a wrong scent. I fancied that Ellida's heart had once been given to you, and that she still had a secret leaning in your direction. So I thought it might perhaps do her good to see you again, and have a talk with you about home and old times.

ARNHOLM. Then it was your wife you meant when you wrote that some one here was waiting and —and perhaps longing for me!

WANGEL. Yes; who else?

ARNHOLM (*quickly*). No no, of course. But I didn't understand.

WANGEL. Naturally not, as I said before. I was on an entirely wrong scent.

ARNHOLM. And you call yourself selfish!

WANGEL. Oh I had such a great error to atone

for. I felt I had no right to reject any expedient that could possibly ease her mind a little.

ARNHOLM. What do you take to be the real explanation of the power this stranger exercises over her?

WANGEL. Hm, my dear friend—there may be sides to the question that don't admit of explanation.

ARNHOLM. Something inexplicable in itself, do you mean? Entirely inexplicable?

WANGEL. Inexplicable for the present, at any rate.

ARNHOLM. Do you believe in such things?

WANGEL. I neither believe nor disbelieve. I simply don't know; so I leave them alone.

ARNHOLM. But tell me one thing: that strange, uncanny theory of hers about the child's eyes——

WANGEL (*eagerly*). I don't in the least believe that about the eyes. I *will* not believe such a thing! It must be pure imagination on her part; nothing else.

ARNHOLM. Did you notice the man's eyes when you saw him yesterday?

WANGEL. Yes, certainly I did.

ARNHOLM. And you found no sort of likeness?

WANGEL (*evasively*). Hm—upon my soul I don't know what to say. It wasn't quite light when I saw him; and besides, Ellida had talked so much about this likeness beforehand—I don't think it was possible for me to observe him without prejudice.

ARNHOLM. No, no; very likely not. But then the other point: that all that dread and unrest came

upon her just at the very time when this stranger would seem to have been on his way home?

WANGEL. Well you see—that again is a belief she must have imagined and dreamt herself into since the day before yesterday. It did not come upon her at all so suddenly—so instantaneously—as she now maintains. But since she heard from this young Lyngstrand that Johnston or Friman—or whatever he's called—was on his way home three years ago—in March—she has evidently persuaded herself that her mental trouble came on in the very same month.

ARNHOLM. And did it not?

WANGEL. Not at all. There had been symptoms of it long before that.—It's true she happened—by chance—to have a rather severe attack precisely in the month of March, three years ago——

ARNHOLM. Well then——!

WANGEL. Oh, but that's quite easily accounted for by the circumstances—the condition—she happened to be in at that time.

ARNHOLM. The symptoms may be read in either way, then.

WANGEL (*wringing his hands*). And to be powerless to help her! I'm at the end of my resources! I see no sort of remedy——!

ARNHOLM. What if you made up your mind to a change of residence—to move to some other place? Perhaps she might find other conditions more homelike to her?

WANGEL. My dear fellow, do you think I haven't suggested that to her? I proposed that we should move out to Skioldvik. But she will not.

ARNHOLM. Not that either?

WANGEL. No, for she thinks it would be useless; and I daresay she's right too.

ARNHOLM. Hm—do you think so?

WANGEL. Yes; and besides—when I come to think further about it—I really don't see how I could manage it. I scarcely think I should be justified, on the girls' account, in moving to such an out-of-the-way corner. After all, they must live where there's at least *some* chance of their getting provided for some day.

ARNHOLM. Provided for? Have you that so much on your mind already?

WANGEL. Why yes, heaven help me; I must think of that too! But then—on the other hand—for the sake of my poor sick Ellida——! Oh, my dear Arnholm—I'm really placed, in many ways, between fire and water!

ARNHOLM. You've perhaps no need to trouble about Boletta—— (*Breaking off.*) I wonder where she—where they have gone?

(*He goes up to the open door and looks out.*)

WANGEL (*beside the piano*). Oh I should be so glad to make any possible sacrifice—for all three of them.—If only I knew what!

(ELLIDA *enters by the door on the left.*)

ELLIDA (*rapidly to* WANGEL). Be sure you don't go out this morning.

WANGEL. No no, certainly not; I'll stay at home with you. (*Points to* ARNHOLM, *who approaches.*) But you haven't said good morning to our friend?

ELLIDA (*turns*). Oh, are you there, Mr. Arnholm? (*Holds out her hand.*) Good morning.

ARNHOLM. Good morning, Mrs. Wangel. You've not gone for your bathe to-day as usual?

ELLIDA. No, no, no! I couldn't think of it to-day. Won't you sit down for a moment?

ARNHOLM. No, thank you, not just now. (*Looks at* WANGEL.) I promised the girls I would join them in the garden.

ELLIDA. Goodness knows whether you'll find them in the garden. I never know where they may have got to.

WANGEL. Oh yes, they're probably down by the pond.

ARNHOLM. I daresay I shall find them.

(*He nods and goes across the veranda into the garden, and out to the right.*)

ELLIDA. What time is it, Wangel?

WANGEL (*looks at his watch*). It's a little past eleven.

ELLIDA. A little past; and at eleven, or half-past, to-night, the steamer will be here. Oh that it were over!

WANGEL (*goes closer to her*). Dear Ellida, there's one thing I should like to ask you about.

ELLIDA. What is it?

WANGEL. The night before last—up at the Prospect—you said that during the last three years you had often seen him bodily before you.

ELLIDA. So I have. I assure you I have.

WANGEL. Well, but how did you see him?

ELLIDA. How did I see him?

WANGEL. I mean, what did he look like when you thought you saw him before you?

ELLIDA. Why, my dear Wangel,—you know yourself now what he looks like.

WANGEL. Did he look like that when you seemed to see him?

ELLIDA. Yes, he did.

WANGEL. Exactly as you saw him in reality last evening?

ELLIDA. Yes, exactly.

WANGEL. Then how did it happen that you didn't know him again?

ELLIDA (*starts*). Did I not?

WANGEL. No. You yourself told me afterwards that you didn't at first know who the stranger was.

ELLIDA (*impressed*). Yes, I really believe you are right! Wasn't that strange, Wangel? Think of my not knowing him at once!

WANGEL. It was only by his eyes, you said——

ELLIDA. Oh yes—his eyes! His eyes!

WANGEL. Well, but up at the Prospect you said that he had always appeared to you just as he was when you parted, ten years ago.

ELLIDA. Did I say that?

WANGEL. Yes.

ELLIDA. Then he must have looked at that time much as he does now.

WANGEL. No. You gave quite another description of him on the way home, the night before last. Ten years ago he had no beard, you said; he was quite differently dressed too. And the breast-pin with the pearl in it? He wore nothing of the sort yesterday.

ELLIDA. No, he didn't.

WANGEL (*looks inquiringly at her*). Now think a little, dear Ellida. Perhaps you can't remember now what he looked like when you parted from him at Bratthammer?

ELLIDA (*reflectively, closing her eyes for a moment*). Not quite distinctly. No—I can't at all to-day. Isn't that strange?

WANGEL. Not so very strange. A new and living figure has presented itself to you, and that obscures the old one—so that you no longer see it.

ELLIDA. Do you think so, Wangel?

WANGEL. Yes; and it obscures your morbid fantasies too; so it's a good thing the reality has presented itself.

ELLIDA. Good! Do you call it a good thing?

WANGEL. Yes; its appearance may be your salvation.

ELLIDA (*seats herself on the sofa*). Wangel—come here and sit by me. I must tell you all my thoughts.

WANGEL. Yes do, dear Ellida.

(*He seats himself on a chair at the other side of the table.*)

ELLIDA. It was really a great misfortune—for both—that brought us two, of all people, together.

WANGEL (*starts*). What do you say?

ELLIDA. Oh yes, it was—quite naturally. It could lead to nothing but disaster—especially considering the way we came together.

WANGEL. What was wrong with the way——?

ELLIDA. Listen now, Wangel,—it is useless for us to go on any longer lying to ourselves—and to each other.

WANGEL. *Are* we doing so? Lying, do you say?

ELLIDA. Yes, lying. Or at any rate—concealing the truth. The truth—the sheer, unadulterated truth—is that you came out there and—bought me.

WANGEL. Bought——! Did you say—bought?

ELLIDA. Oh, I was not a bit better than you. I joined in the bargain. I went and sold myself to you.

WANGEL (*looks at her, deeply pained*). Ellida, have you the heart to say so?

ELLIDA. Why, what else can you call it? You couldn't bear the void in your house; you looked about for a new wife——

WANGEL. And for a new mother for the children, Ellida.

ELLIDA. That too perhaps—by the way, as it were. Although—you didn't in the least know whether I was fit to be a mother to them. You had only seen me and spoken with me once or twice. But you took a fancy to me, and so——

WANGEL. Yes, give it what name you please.

ELLIDA. And I, for my part——. I stood there helpless and forlorn and utterly alone. What more natural than that I should jump at the bargain—when you came and offered to maintain me all my life.

WANGEL. I assure you I did not see it in that light, my dear Ellida. I asked you frankly if you would share with me and the children the little I could call my own.

ELLIDA. Yes, you did. But I ought not to have accepted! I should never have accepted at any

price! I should never have sold myself! Rather the meanest labour—rather the deepest poverty—of my own free will—by my own choice!

WANGEL (*rising*). Then have the five or six years we have lived together been utterly valueless to you?

ELLIDA. Oh don't think that, Wangel! You have been as kind to me as any one could possibly desire. But I did not come into your home of my own free will,—that is the thing.

WANGEL (*looks at her*). Not of your free will?

ELLIDA. No; it was not of my own free will that I cast in my lot with yours.

WANGEL (*softly*). Ah, I remember—the phrase he used yesterday.

ELLIDA. The whole matter lies in that phrase. It has thrown a new light on things for me; so that I see it all now.

WANGEL. What do you see?

ELLIDA. I see that the life we two lead with each other—is really no marriage at all.

WANGEL (*bitterly*). There you are right. The life we *now* lead is no marriage at all.

ELLIDA. Nor the life we led before; never; not from the outset. (*Looks straight before her.*) The first—that might have been a real and true marriage.

WANGEL. The first? What "first" do you mean?

ELLIDA. Mine,—with *him.*

WANGEL (*looks at her in astonishment*). I don't understand you at all!

ELLIDA. Oh my dear Wangel,—do not let us lie to each other; nor to ourselves.

WANGEL. No, of course not! But what then?

ELLIDA. Well, don't you see—we can't get away from this—that a voluntary promise is to the full as binding as a marriage.

WANGEL. Why, what in the world——!

ELLIDA (*rises impetuously*). Let me leave you, Wangel!

WANGEL. Ellida——! Ellida——!

ELLIDA. Yes, yes—let me! I can assure you there will be nothing else for it in the end—after the way we two came together.

WANGEL (*with suppressed emotion*). So it has come to this!

ELLIDA. It *had* to come to this; there is no other way out of it.

WANGEL (*looks sorrowfully at her*). So not even in our daily communion have I won you. You have never, never been wholly mine.

ELLIDA. Oh Wangel, if only I could love you as I gladly would! As tenderly as you deserve! But I feel so clearly—it will never be.

WANGEL. A divorce then? It is a divorce,—a formal, legal divorce,—that you want?

ELLIDA. My dear, you don't understand me at all. It's not the forms that I care a bit about. I lay no stress whatever upon these external details. What I wish is that we two should agree, of our own free will, to release each other.

WANGEL (*bitterly, nods slowly*). To cancel the bargain,—yes.

ELLIDA (*eagerly*). Precisely! To cancel the bargain!

WANGEL. And after that, Ellida? Afterwards? Have you thought of the outlook for both of us? What shape would our lives take—both yours and mine?

ELLIDA. That must be as it may. The future must shape itself as best it can. What I am begging of you, Wangel,—that is the chief matter! Set me free! Give me my full freedom again!

WANGEL. Ellida—this is a terrible demand you make upon me. Let me at least have time to collect myself and come to a resolve. Let us discuss the matter more thoroughly; and do you give yourself time to reflect what you are doing!

ELLIDA. But there is no time to waste on all that. You must give me back my freedom this very day!

WANGEL. Why to-day?

ELLIDA. It is to-night that he is coming.

WANGEL (*starts*). Coming! He! What has the stranger to do with this?

ELLIDA. I want to meet him in full freedom.

WANGEL. And what—what do you intend to do then?

ELLIDA. I do not want to take refuge in the plea that I am another man's wife—or that I have no choice left me. For then there would be nothing decisive in my action.

WANGEL. You talk of choice! Choice, Ellida! Choice in this matter!

ELLIDA. Yes, choose I must—freely choose either

course. I must be free to let him go away alone—or —to go with him.

WANGEL. Do you understand what you say? Go with him! Place your whole fate in his hands!

ELLIDA. Did I not place my whole fate in *your* hands! And that without thinking twice.

WANGEL. That may be. But he! He! A total stranger! A man you know so little about!

ELLIDA. I knew perhaps even less of you; and yet I went with you.

WANGEL. At least you knew pretty well what kind of life you were entering upon. But now? Now? Reflect! What do you know now? Nothing whatever: not even who—or what he is.

ELLIDA (*looking straight before her*). That is true. But that is just what fills me with awe.[1]

WANGEL. Yes, well it may——

[1] This passage is extremely difficult to translate. After trying half-a-dozen other renderings, we have determined to represent "det grufulde" by "awe" or "awful," and "skræmmer og drager" by "affrights and allures." "Det grufulde" means literally "the grueful" ("grue" as in the English word "gruesome" and the Scotch phrase, "it gars me grue"). "Awe" represents the idea very inadequately, but "terror" or "horror" seemed even more impossible in some of the contexts in which "det grufulde" occurs. There is nothing harder than to find satisfactory equivalents for phrases on which the author rings the changes twenty times over, as Ibsen does on "det grufulde" and "skræmmer og drager" (see pp. 163, 164, 165, 180, 188, 219, 220, 234, 237, 238). For the moment, the words we have chosen seem to us the least inconvenient. Very likely, when the sheets are printed off and alteration is impossible, we may bitterly regret that we did not hark back upon one of our earlier renderings. But the press cannot wait upon our vacillations; on us, as on Ellida, lies the burden of an irrevocable choice. Such are the agonies of the translator!

ELLIDA. That is why I feel as if I *must* give way.

WANGEL (*looks at her*). Because it fills you with awe?

ELLIDA. Yes, just because of that.

WANGEL (*nearer*). Tell me, Ellida—what do you really mean by awe?

ELLIDA (*reflects*). I call a thing awful—when it both allures and affrights me.

WANGEL. Allures?

ELLIDA. Allures most of all, I think.

WANGEL (*slowly*). You are akin to the sea.

ELLIDA. There is awe in that too.

WANGEL. And in yourself no less. You both allure and affright.

ELLIDA. Do you think so, Wangel?

WANGEL. I have never really known you; never thoroughly. I am beginning to understand that now.

ELLIDA. And therefore you must set me free! Loose me from every tie to you and yours! I am not the woman you took me for; you see that now yourself. Now we can part in mutual understanding—and of our own free will.

WANGEL (*gloomily*). It would perhaps be best for us both—to part. But for all that, I cannot! It is you that fill me with awe, Ellida. Alluring—that you are above all things.

ELLIDA. Do you say so?

WANGEL. Let us try to get through this day with no false step—to act calmly and collectedly. I cannot release you and let you go to-day. I must

not—for your own sake, Ellida. I assert my right and my duty to protect you.

ELLIDA. Protect? What is there to protect me against? It is not any outward force or violence that threatens me. The awe lies deeper, Wangel! The awe is nothing but the allurement in my own mind; and what can you do against that?

WANGEL. I can strengthen and support you in combating it.

ELLIDA. Yes—if I had the will to combat it.

WANGEL. Have you not the will?

ELLIDA. Oh, that's just what I don't know!

WANGEL. To-night all will be decided, dear Ellida——

ELLIDA (*breaks out*). Yes, think of it——! The decision so near! The decision for life!

WANGEL. ——and then to-morrow——

ELLIDA. Yes, to-morrow! Perhaps I shall have wrecked my true future!

WANGEL. Your true——?

ELLIDA. An entire and perfect life of freedom wrecked—wrecked for me! And perhaps—for him too.

WANGEL (*in a lower tone, seizing her by the wrist*). Ellida,—do you love this stranger?

ELLIDA. Do I——? Oh how can I tell! I only know that he fills me with awe, and that——

WANGEL. ——and that——?

ELLIDA (*tears herself away*). ——and that I feel as though my home were with him.

WANGEL (*droops his head*). I begin to understand.

ELLIDA. And what help, what remedy have you to offer me?

WANGEL (*looks sorrowfully at her*). To-morrow—he will be gone. Then you will be safe from disaster; and then I promise to release you and let you go. We will cancel the bargain, Ellida.

ELLIDA. Oh Wangel——! To-morrow—it will be too late——!

WANGEL (*looks out towards the garden*). The children! The children——! Let us at least spare them—for the present.

(ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear in the garden.* LYNGSTRAND *takes leave without entering the house, and goes out to the left. The others come into the room.*)

ARNHOLM. Ah, I can tell you we've been laying great plans——

HILDA. We want to go out on the fiord this evening, and——

BOLETTA. No no, don't tell!

WANGEL. We two have also been laying plans.

ARNHOLM. Ah—really?

WANGEL. To-morrow Ellida is going to Skioldvik for a time.

BOLETTA. Going away——?

ARNHOLM. That's very wise, Mrs. Wangel.

WANGEL. Ellida wants to go home again; home to the sea.

HILDA (*with a little rush towards* ELLIDA). Are you going away? Going away from us!

ELLIDA (*startled*). Why, Hilda! What's the matter with you?

HILDA (*catching herself up*). Oh, nothing. (*In a low tone, turning from her.*) Go by all means!

BOLETTA (*anxiously*). Father, I can see—you are going away too—to Skioldvik!

WANGEL. No, certainly not! I shall perhaps run out now and then——

BOLETTA. And home again——?

WANGEL. Yes, home——

BOLETTA. ——now and then, I suppose.

WANGEL. My dear child, it must be so. (*He walks away.*)

ARNHOLM (*whispers*). I have something to say to you by-and-by, Boletta.

(*He goes over to* WANGEL. *They converse in a low tone, by the door.*)

ELLIDA (*softly, to* BOLETTA). What was the matter with Hilda? She looked quite aghast!

BOLETTA. Have you never seen what Hilda has been thirsting for day after day?

ELLIDA. Thirsting for?

BOLETTA. Ever since you came into the house!

ELLIDA. No, no,—what is it?

BOLETTA. One word of affection from you.

ELLIDA. Ah——! What if there were a life-work for me here!

(*She clasps her hands above her head and looks immovably before her, as if a prey to conflicting thoughts and moods.*)

(WANGEL *and* ARNHOLM *come forward conversing in whispers.*)

(BOLETTA *goes and looks into the side room on the right. Then she throws the door wide open.*)

BOLETTA. Well, father dear—dinner is on the table, if you——

WANGEL (*with forced composure*). Is it, child? That's right. Come along, Arnholm! We'll drink a stirrup-cup with—with "the lady from the sea."

(*They go towards the door on the right.*)

Act Fifth.

(*The remote part of* DR. WANGEL'S *garden, by the carp-pond. Deepening summer twilight.*)

(ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, LYNGSTRAND, *and* HILDA, *in a boat on the fiord, are shoving from the left along the shore.*)

HILDA. Look, we can easily jump ashore here!

ARNHOLM. No no, don't!

LYNGSTRAND. I can't jump, Miss Hilda.

HILDA. Can't you jump either, Mr. Arnholm?

ARNHOLM. I would rather not.

BOLETTA. Let's land at the bathing-house steps.

(*They shove out to the right.*)

(*At that moment* BALLESTED *appears from the right, on the footpath, carrying music and a bugle. He greets those in the boat, turns, and talks to them. Their answers are heard further and further off.*)

BALLESTED. What do you say?—Yes of course it's in honour of the English steamer. It's her last trip this year. But if you want to enjoy the music you mustn't put off too long. (*Calls out.*) What? (*Shakes his head.*) Can't hear what you say!

(ELLIDA, *with a shawl over her head, comes in from the left, followed by* DR. WANGEL.)

WANGEL. But my dear Ellida, I assure you there is ample time.

ELLIDA. No, no, there isn't! He may come at any moment.

BALLESTED (*outside, by the garden fence*). Ah, good evening, Doctor! Good evening, Mrs. Wangel!

WANGEL (*notices him*). Oh, are you there? Is there to be music to-night again?

BALLESTED. Yes. The Musical Society proposes to show what it can do. There's no lack of festive occasions at this season. To-night it's in honour of the Englishman.

ELLIDA. The English steamer! Is it in sight already?

BALLESTED. Not yet; but it's coming down the fiord—among the islands. It's upon you before you know where you are.

ELLIDA. Yes, that's what I say.

WANGEL (*partly to* ELLIDA). This is its last trip. After to-night, we shall see no more of it.

BALLESTED. A melancholy thought, Doctor. But that's why we're turning out in its honour, as I said before. Ah yes, ah yes! The happy summer-time is drawing to a close. "Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as they say in the tragedy.[1]

ELLIDA. All the straits ice-bound,—yes.

BALLESTED. Mournful reflection! For weeks and months now we have been joyful children of the summer; it is hard to reconcile one's self with the dark days. At first, that's to say; for people can alcli—ac—climatise themselves, Mrs. Wangel. Yes really they can.

(*He bows and goes out to the left.*)

[1] "Snart er alle sunde lukket."—Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl.*

ELLIDA (*looks out across the fiord*). Oh this torturing suspense! This intolerable last half-hour before the decision!

WANGEL. Then you're still bent on speaking with him yourself?

ELLIDA. I *must* speak with him myself; for I must make my choice of my own free will.

WANGEL. You have no choice, Ellida; you won't be allowed to choose—*I* won't allow you.

ELLIDA. You can never prevent my choosing; neither you nor any one else. You can forbid me to go away with him—to cast in my lot with him—if I should choose that. You can forcibly detain me here, against my will. That you can do. But the choice in my innermost soul—my choice of him and not of you,—in case I should and must choose so,—that you cannot prevent.

WANGEL. No, you are right; I cannot prevent that.

ELLIDA. And then I have no basis for resistance! At home here there is nothing whatever to attach and bind me. I am utterly without root in your house, Wangel. The children are not mine—their hearts, I mean. They have never been mine. When I go away—if I do go away—either with him to-night or out to Skioldvik to-morrow, I have not a key to give up, not a direction to leave behind me, about anything in the world. So utterly rootless am I in your house; so entirely outside of everything have I stood from the very first moment.

WANGEL. You yourself willed it so.

ELLIDA. No, I did not. I had no will one way or

the other. I have merely let everything remain as I found it the day I came. It is you—and no other—who have willed it so.

WANGEL. I meant to do the best I could for you.

ELLIDA. Oh yes, Wangel, I am sure of that! But retribution follows such a course; it avenges itself! Now I find myself deprived of all that should bind—support—and help me. There is no counter-allurement for me in what should have been the dearest treasure of our common life.

WANGEL. I see that well enough, Ellida; and so to-morrow you shall have your freedom again. Hereafter you shall live your own life.

ELLIDA. You call that my own life! Oh no, my own true life got into a wrong groove when I joined it to yours. (*Clenches her hands together in fear and agitation.*) And now—to-night—in half an hour—he whom I have forsaken will be here—he to whom I should have been as flawlessly faithful as he has been to me! Now he is coming to offer me—for the last and only time—a chance of beginning life afresh—of living my own real life—the life that at once allures and affrights me—and that I *cannot* forego. Not of my own free will!

WANGEL. That is just why you require your husband—and your physician also—to take the power out of your hands, and to act on your behalf.

ELLIDA. Yes, Wangel, I understand that very well. Oh, you must not doubt that there are times when I feel that there would be peace and safety in nestling close under your wing, and trying to defy all

the powers that allure and affright. But I cannot do it. No, no,—I cannot do it!

WANGEL. Come, Ellida—let us walk up and down a little.

ELLIDA. I should like to; but I dare not. You know he said that I was to wait for him here.

WANGEL. Come along. You have plenty of time yet.

ELLIDA. Do you think so?

WANGEL. Ample time, I assure you.

ELLIDA. Let us walk a little then.

(*They go out in front, to the right. At the same moment* ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *appear by the upper bank of the pond.*)

BOLETTA (*catching sight of the retiring figures*). Look there——!

ARNHOLM (*softly*). Hush! Let them go.

BOLETTA. Can you understand what has been passing between them these last few days?

ARNHOLM. Have you noticed anything?

BOLETTA. *Have* I noticed——!

ARNHOLM. Anything particular?

BOLETTA. Oh yes; many things. Haven't you?

ARNHOLM. Well, I don't quite know——

BOLETTA. Yes, I'm sure you have; only you won't say what you think.

ARNHOLM. I think it would do your step-mother good to take that little trip.

BOLETTA. Do you?

ARNHOLM. Yes; I fancy it would be a good thing for all parties if she were to get away a little now and then.

BOLETTA. If she goes home to Skioldvik to-morrow, she'll certainly never come back again.

ARNHOLM. Why, my dear Boletta, what have you got into your head?

BOLETTA. I'm perfectly convinced of it. Just you wait! You'll see, she won't return; not while Hilda and I are at home, at any rate.

ARNHOLM. Hilda too?

BOLETTA. Well, perhaps Hilda mightn't matter so much; for she's hardly more than a child yet, and I believe in her heart she worships Ellida. But with me it's different, you see; a step-mother who's not so very much older than one's self——

ARNHOLM. My dear Boletta—you may not have so long to wait before leaving home.

BOLETTA (*eagerly*). Do you think so? Have you spoken to father about it?

ARNHOLM. Yes, that too.

BOLETTA. Well—what did he say?

ARNHOLM. Hm—your father is so absorbed in other thoughts just now——

BOLETTA. Yes, yes, that's just what I told you.

ARNHOLM. But so much I got out of him, that you must not count upon any help from that quarter.

BOLETTA. Not——?

ARNHOLM. He put his position quite clearly before me, and showed that anything of the kind was a sheer impossibility for him.

BOLETTA (*reproachfully*). And yet you had the heart to stand there and make a fool of me?

ARNHOLM. Indeed I did not, dear Boletta. It

depends entirely upon yourself whether you will leave home or not.

BOLETTA. Depends upon me, you say?

ARNHOLM. Whether you will go out into the world and learn all that your heart is set upon. Whether you will take part in all that you sit at home here thirsting after. Whether you will live your life under happier conditions, Boletta. What do you say?

BOLETTA (*clasping her hands*). Oh my great God——! But it's utterly impossible all this. If father neither can nor will, then——. There's no one else in the whole world that I can turn to.

ARNHOLM. Could you not consent to accept assistance from your old—your former tutor?

BOLETTA. From you, Mr. Arnholm? Would you really——?

ARNHOLM. Stand by you? Yes, with the greatest of pleasure, both in word and deed; that you may rely upon. Do you accept my offer then? Do you consent?

BOLETTA. Do I consent? To leave home—to see the world—to acquire some real knowledge—to fulfil all my delightful, impossible dreams——?

ARNHOLM. Yes, all this you can now realise, if only you will.

BOLETTA. And you will help me to all this unspeakable happiness! Oh—but tell me—*can* I accept such an offer from a stranger?

ARNHOLM. You can quite well accept it from me, Boletta. From me you may accept anything.

BOLETTA (*seizes his hands*). Yes, I really think

I may. I don't know how it is, but—— (*With an outburst of emotion.*) Oh, I could both laugh and cry for joy!—for sheer happiness! Oh—to think that I shall learn what life is, after all; I was getting so afraid that it would slip away from me.

ARNHOLM. You need not be afraid of that, dear Boletta. But now you must tell me quite frankly whether there is anything—any tie that binds you here?

BOLETTA. Any tie? No, none.

ARNHOLM. None at all?

BOLETTA. No, none whatever. That is,—of course father is a tie—in a way. And Hilda too. But——

ARNHOLM. Well—your father you will have to leave sooner or later; and Hilda too will one day take her own path in life; that is only a question of time. But otherwise there is nothing to bind you, Boletta? No engagement of any sort?

BOLETTA. No, nothing of the kind. So far as that's concerned, I can quite well go wherever I please.

ARNHOLM. Well then, if that is the case, my dear Boletta—you shall come away with me.

BOLETTA (*claps her hands*). Oh great heavens—what a joy to think of!

ARNHOLM. I hope you have full confidence in me?

BOLETTA. Yes, indeed I have.

ARNHOLM. And you can place yourself and your future fully and fearlessly in my hands, Boletta? You feel you can, do you not?

BOLETTA. Oh yes, certainly! Why should I not? Can you doubt it? You, my old tutor—my tutor in the old days, I mean.

ARNHOLM. Not only because of that; I don't lay so much stress on that side of the matter. But—well—since you are free then, Boletta—since there is no tie that binds you,—I ask you—if you would be willing—willing to unite yourself to me—for life?

BOLETTA (*starts back in fear*). Oh—what are you saying?

ARNHOLM. For your whole life, Boletta. Will you be my wife?

BOLETTA (*half to herself*). No, no, no! This is impossible! Utterly impossible!

ARNHOLM. Is it really so utterly impossible for you to——

BOLETTA. You surely can't mean what you're saying, Mr. Arnholm? (*Looks at him.*) Or——. Perhaps though——. Was this what you meant when you proposed to do so much for me?

ARNHOLM. Now you must listen to me a little, Boletta. It appears I have taken you quite by surprise.

BOLETTA. Oh, how could such an offer—from you,—how could it fail to surprise me?

ARNHOLM. No doubt you are right. You didn't know, of course,—you couldn't know, that it was for your sake I made this journey here.

BOLETTA. Did you come here for—for my sake?

ARNHOLM. Yes, I did, Boletta. I got a letter from your father this spring—and in it was a phrase

which led me to believe—hm—that you had kept your former tutor in—in a little more than friendly remembrance.

BOLETTA. How could father write such a thing!

ARNHOLM. It appears that was not what he meant at all. But in the meantime I had accustomed myself to the thought that here was a young girl waiting and longing for me to come again.—No, you mustn't interrupt me, dear Boletta! And, you see,—when one, like myself, is no longer in the first flush of youth, such a belief—or imagination—makes an exceedingly strong impression. A vivid—a grateful affection for you grew up within me. I felt I must come to you; see you again; tell you that I shared the feelings which I imagined you entertained for me.

BOLETTA. But now, when you know that it was not so! That it was a mistake!

ARNHOLM. That makes no difference, Boletta. Your image—as I bear it within my heart—will always remain coloured and thrown into relief by the sentiment that mistake aroused in me. Perhaps you can't understand this; but so it is.

BOLETTA. I never dreamed that such a thing could possibly happen.

ARNHOLM. But now that it has happened——. What do you say, Boletta? Can you not make up your mind to—to be my wife?

BOLETTA. Oh, it seems to me so utterly impossible, Mr. Arnholm. You, who have been my teacher! I cannot imagine myself standing in any other kind of relation to you.

ARNHOLM. Well well—if you feel absolutely sure

that you cannot—then the relation between us remains unaltered, my dear Boletta.

BOLETTA. How do you mean?

ARNHOLM. Of course I stand to my proposition all the same. I will arrange for you to get away from home and see something of the world; to learn what you really want to, and live in security and independence. Your more distant future, too, I will provide for, Boletta. In me you will always have a firm, steadfast friend to rely upon. Be sure of that!

BOLETTA. Oh dear—Mr. Arnholm—all this has become quite impossible now.

ARNHOLM. Is this impossible too?

BOLETTA. Yes, can't you see it is! After what you have said to me—and after the answer I have given you——. Oh, you must surely understand that I cannot accept such great favours from you! I can accept nothing in the world from you; never after this!

ARNHOLM. Then would you rather sit at home here and let life slip away from you?

BOLETTA. Oh, that is intolerable to think of!

ARNHOLM. Will you renounce all hope of seeing something of the outer world? Renounce your chance of taking part in all that you say you are thirsting for? Can you know that there is so much in life—and yet never take any true grasp of it? Reflect, Boletta.

BOLETTA. Yes yes — you are quite right, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM. And then—when your father is no longer with you—you might find yourself helpless

and alone in the world; perhaps have to give yourself to another man—whom you—possibly—might not be able to feel any affection for, either.

BOLETTA. Oh yes,—I see quite well how true it is—all that you say. But still—!——Or perhaps, after all——

ARNHOLM (*quickly*). Well!

BOLETTA (*looks at him doubtfully*). Perhaps it might not be so utterly impossible after all——

ARNHOLM. What, Boletta?

BOLETTA. That I might—perhaps agree to—what—what you proposed to me.

ARNHOLM. Do you mean that perhaps you might——? That at least you would grant me the happiness of coming to your aid as a faithful friend?

BOLETTA. No no no! Never that! That would be absolutely impossible. No—Mr. Arnholm—rather take me.

ARNHOLM. Boletta! Will you after all——?

BOLETTA. Yes,—I think—I will.

ARNHOLM. You will be my wife?

BOLETTA. Yes; if you still think you—ought to take me.

ARNHOLM. If I think——! (*Seizes her hand.*) Oh thanks, thanks, Boletta! What you have been saying—your hesitation at first—that does not alarm me. If I do not fully possess your heart as yet, I shall know how to win it. Oh Boletta, how I will treasure you!

BOLETTA. And I am to see the world; to take part in its life; you have promised me that.

ARNHOLM. And I hold to it.

BOLETTA. And I am to learn everything I want to.

ARNHOLM. I myself will be your teacher, as in the old days, Boletta. Think of the last year you were my pupil——

BOLETTA (*in quiet self-absorption*). Fancy,—to know one's self free—to go out into the unknown world! And then to have no care for the future; no wretched fears as to your bare livelihood——

ARNHOLM. No, you shall never have to waste a thought upon such things. And, my dear Boletta, that's a good thing in its way—isn't it now?

BOLETTA. Yes, it is indeed. No doubt about it.

ARNHOLM (*putting his arm round her waist*). Oh you shall see how cosily and comfortably we will arrange our life! And how peacefully and securely we will rely upon each other, Boletta!

BOLETTA. Yes, I begin to——. I really think—that we should get on together. (*Looks out to the right, and hurriedly disengages herself.*) Ah! Please don't say anything about it!

ARNHOLM. What is it, dear?

BOLETTA. Oh, it's that poor—— (*Points.*) Over there.

ARNHOLM. Is it your father——?

BOLETTA. No, it's the young sculptor. He's walking over there with Hilda.

ARNHOLM. Oh, Lyngstrand. Why should you care about him?

BOLETTA. Oh you know how delicate and ill he is.

ARNHOLM. Yes, if it isn't all his imagination.

BOLETTA. No, it's real; he can't live long. But it's perhaps best for him.

ARNHOLM. How best for him, my dear?

BOLETTA. Well because,—because I don't think much would come of his art in any case.—Let us go before they come.

ARNHOLM. By all means, my dear Boletta.

(HILDA *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear beside the pond.*)

HILDA. Hi! Hi! Won't you condescend to wait for us?

ARNHOLM. Boletta and I would rather go ahead.

(*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*)

LYNGSTRAND (*laughs quietly*). It's great fun here just now; everybody goes in couples; always two and two together.

HILDA (*looks after them*). I could almost swear that he's making love to her.

LYNGSTRAND. Really? Have you seen anything to make you think so?

HILDA. Oh yes. You can't well help it—if you keep your eyes about you.

LYNGSTRAND. But Miss Boletta won't have him. I'm sure of that.

HILDA. No, she thinks he looks so frightfully old: and she's afraid he'll soon be bald, too.

LYNGSTRAND. Ah, I don't mean only because of that. She wouldn't have him in any case.

HILDA. How can you know that?

LYNGSTRAND. Well, because there's some one else she has promised to keep in her thoughts.

HILDA. Only to keep in her thoughts?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, whilst he is away.

HILDA. Oh, I suppose it's you she's to keep in her thoughts.

LYNGSTRAND. Possibly.

HILDA. Has she promised you that?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, only think—she's promised me that! But you mustn't let on that you know about it.

HILDA. Oh, don't be afraid: I'm as silent as the grave.

LYNGSTRAND. I think it's so tremendously kind of her.

HILDA. And then, when you come home again—is it to be an engagement? Are you going to marry her?

LYNGSTRAND. No, I scarcely think that would do. You see, marriage is out of the question for me for a few years yet; and then, when I've made my way, she'll be a bit too old for me, I fancy.

HILDA. And yet you want her to go on thinking of you?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes; it would help me so much; as an artist, you understand. And she, having herself no special vocation in life, can so easily do it. But it's kind of her, all the same.

HILDA. Do you think, then, that you can make quicker progress with your group if you know that Boletta is thinking of you at home here?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I imagine so. You see, the knowledge that somewhere in the world a young, exquisite, silent woman is secretly dreaming of one

—I think it must be so—so——. Well, I scarcely know what to call it.

HILDA. Do you mean—thrilling?

LYNGSTRAND. Thrilling? Oh yes. It's thrilling I mean; or something of that sort. (*Looks at her a moment.*) You're so bright, Miss Hilda; really you're very bright, you know. When I come home again you'll be just about as old as your sister is at present. Perhaps you'll look as she looks now; and perhaps you'll have grown like her in mind as well. Very likely you'll be, as it were, both yourself and her—in one body, so to speak.

HILDA. Would that please you?

LYNGSTRAND. I don't quite know. Yes, I almost think so. But now—for this summer—I prefer you to be like yourself alone—just exactly as you are.

HILDA. Do you like me best so?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I like you exceedingly as you are.

HILDA. Hm,—tell me,—as an artist—do you think I do right in always wearing light summer dresses?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, I think you do perfectly right.

HILDA. Then you think bright colours suit me?

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, charmingly, to my taste.

HILDA. But tell me—as an artist—how do you think I should look in black?

LYNGSTRAND. In black, Miss Hilda?

HILDA. Yes, all in black. Do you think I should look nice?

LYNGSTRAND. Black is scarcely the thing for the summer-time; but for that matter I'm sure you'd look

extremely well in black too. Yes, you have just the figure for it.

HILDA (*gazing before her*). In black right up to the neck—a black ruffle—black gloves and a long black veil behind.

LYNGSTRAND. If you were dressed like that, Miss Hilda, I should long to be a painter, so that I might paint a young, lovely, sorrowing widow.

HILDA. Or a young girl sorrowing for her betrothed.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, that would suit you still better. But you can't wish to dress yourself like that?

HILDA. I don't know; I think it's thrilling.

LYNGSTRAND. Thrilling?

HILDA. Thrilling to think of, yes. (*Points suddenly to the left.*) Oh, look there!

LYNGSTRAND (*looking in the direction indicated*). The big English steamer! And right in at the pier!

(WANGEL *and* ELLIDA *appear by the pond.*)

WANGEL. No, I assure you, my dear Ellida, you're mistaken! (*Sees the others.*) What, are you two here? She's not in sight yet, is she, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND. The big English boat?

WANGEL. Yes.

LYNGSTRAND (*pointing*). There she lies already, Doctor.

ELLIDA. Ah—! I knew it.

WANGEL. She's come!

LYNGSTRAND. Come like a thief in the night, you might say. So absolutely noiselessly——

WANGEL. You must take Hilda down to the pier. Make haste! I'm sure she would like to hear the music.

LYNGSTRAND. Yes, we were just going, Doctor.

WANGEL. We will perhaps come afterwards. We'll come presently.

HILDA (*whispers to* LYNGSTRAND). Another pair, you see.

(*She and* LYNGSTRAND *go out through the garden to the left. Distant music of wind instruments is heard out on the fiord during the following.*)

ELLIDA. He has come! He is here! Yes, yes—I feel it.

WANGEL. You had better go in, Ellida. Let me see him alone.

ELLIDA. Oh—it's impossible! Impossible, I say! (*With a shriek.*) Ah—do you see him, Wangel!

(THE STRANGER *enters from the left and stops on the footpath, outside the garden fence.*)

THE STRANGER (*bows*). Good evening. I have come again you see, Ellida.

ELLIDA. Yes, yes, yes,—the hour has come.

THE STRANGER. Are you ready to start? Or are you not?

WANGEL. You can see for yourself that she is not.

THE STRANGER. I don't mind about travelling-clothes and trunks and that sort of thing. I have on board with me everything she requires for the voyage; and I've secured a cabin for her. (*To*

ELLIDA.) I ask you, then, if you are ready to come with me—to come with me of your own free will?

ELLIDA (*imploringly*). Oh, do not ask me! Do not tempt me so!

(*A steamer-bell is heard in the distance.*)

THE STRANGER. There goes the first bell for getting on board. Now you must say yes or no.

ELLIDA (*wrings her hands*). To decide! To decide for life! To choose irrevocably!

THE STRANGER. Irrevocably. In half an hour it will be too late.

ELLIDA (*looks timidly and inquiringly at him*). What makes you cling to me so persistently?

THE STRANGER. Do you not feel, as I do, that we two belong to each other?

ELLIDA. Do you mean because of that promise?

THE STRANGER. Promises bind no one: neither man nor woman. If I cling persistently to you, it is because—because I cannot do otherwise.

ELLIDA (*softly and trembling*). Why did you not come sooner?

WANGEL. Ellida!

ELLIDA (*with an outburst of emotion*). Oh—what is it that tempts and allures and entices—towards the unknown! The whole might of the sea concentred upon me!

(THE STRANGER *climbs over the garden fence.*)

ELLIDA (*shrinks behind* WANGEL). What is it? What do you want?

THE STRANGER. I see it—I hear it in your voice,—it is me you will choose in the end.

WANGEL (*steps towards him*). My wife has no choice in the matter. I am here to choose for her and to protect her. Yes, protect her! If you do not get away from here—out of the country—and never come back—do you know what you expose yourself to?

ELLIDA. No no, Wangel! Not that!

THE STRANGER. What will you do to me?

WANGEL. I will have you arrested—as a felon! At once! Before you can get on board! I know all about the murder out at Skioldvik.

ELLIDA. Oh Wangel,—how can you——?

THE STRANGER. I was prepared for that move; and therefore,—(*Takes a revolver out of his breast pocket*),—I have provided myself with this.

ELLIDA (*throws herself before* WANGEL). No no—do not kill him! Rather kill me!

THE STRANGER. Neither you nor him; be easy on that score. This is for myself; I will live and die a free man!

ELLIDA (*with increasing agitation*). Wangel, let me tell you this—tell you in his hearing! I know you can keep me here! You have the power, and no doubt you will use it! But my mind—all my thoughts—all my irresistible longings and desires—these you cannot fetter! They will yearn and struggle—out into the unknown—that I was created for—and that you have barred against me!

WANGEL (*in quiet grief*). I see it well, Ellida! Step by step you are gliding away from me. Your

craving for the vast and infinite—and for the unattainable—will drive your mind out into the darkness at last.

ELLIDA. Oh yes, yes,—I feel it—like black soundless wings hovering over me.

WANGEL. It shall not come to that. There is no other way of deliverance for you; at least I see none. And therefore—therefore I—I cancel our bargain on the spot. So now you can choose your own path—in full—full freedom.

ELLIDA (*gazes at him awhile as if speechless*). Is this true—true—what you say? Do you mean it—from your inmost heart?

WANGEL. Yes, from the inmost depths of my suffering heart, I mean it.

ELLIDA. And *can* you do it? Can you carry out your purpose?

WANGEL. Yes, I can. I can—because I love you so deeply.

ELLIDA (*softly and tremblingly*). So closely—so tenderly have you come to love me!

WANGEL. The years of our union have taught me to.

ELLIDA (*clasps her hands together*). And I,—I have been blind to it!

WANGEL. Your thoughts took other directions. But now,—now you are fully freed from me and mine. Now your own true life can return to its—its right groove again. For now you can choose in freedom; and on your own responsibility, Ellida.

ELLIDA (*clasps her head with her hands and*

gazes fixedly towards WANGEL). In freedom—and on my own responsibility? Responsibility too?—That transforms everything!

(*The steamer bell rings again.*)

THE STRANGER. Do you hear, Ellida? They are ringing for the last time. Come away?

ELLIDA (*turns towards him, looks fixedly at him, and says with decision in her voice*). I can never go with you after this.

THE STRANGER. You will not go?

ELLIDA (*clings to* WANGEL). Oh—after this I will never leave you!

WANGEL. Ellida,—Ellida!

THE STRANGER. It is all over then?

ELLIDA. Yes! Over for all time!

THE STRANGER. So I see. There is something here that is stronger than my will.

ELLIDA. Your will has no longer a feather's weight with me. For me you are a dead man, who has come home from the sea—and who is returning to it again. But I am no longer in awe of you: you allure me no more.

THE STRANGER. Good-bye, Mrs. Wangel! (*He vaults over the fence.*) Henceforth you are nothing but—a bygone shipwreck in my life.

(*He goes out to the left.*)

WANGEL (*looks at her awhile*). Ellida—your mind is like the sea: it has its ebb and flow. What caused the transformation?

ELLIDA. Oh, do you not understand that the transformation came,—that it *had* to come—when I could choose in freedom?

WANGEL. And the unknown,—it allures you no longer?

ELLIDA. It neither allures nor affrights me. I could have seen into it—gone into it—if I had wished to. I was free to choose it; and therefore I was able to reject it.

WANGEL. I begin to understand you—by degrees. You think and conceive in images—in visible pictures. Your longing and yearning for the sea—the allurement that stranger possessed for you—must have been the expression of an awakening and growing need for freedom within you—nothing else.

ELLIDA. Oh, I don't know what to say to that. But you have been a good physician for me. You found, and you dared to *use*, the right remedy—the *only* one that could help me.

WANGEL. Yes, at the last extremity of danger we physicians dare so much.—But now you will come to me again, will you not, Ellida?

ELLIDA. Yes, my dear, faithful Wangel—now I will come to you again. Now I can, for now I come to you in freedom—of my own will—and on my own responsibility.

WANGEL (*looks tenderly at her*). Ellida! Ellida! Oh,—to think that we two can now live wholly for each other——

ELLIDA. ——and with all our memories in common. Yours—as well as mine.

WANGEL. Yes, all in common, dearest!

ELLIDA. And our two children, Wangel——

WANGEL. *Ours* you call them!

ELLIDA. They are not mine yet—but I shall win them.

WANGEL. Ours! (*Kisses her hands joyfully and quickly.*) Oh, I thank you for that word more than I can tell.

(HILDA, BALLESTED, LYNGSTRAND, ARNHOLM, *and* BOLETTA *come from the left into the garden.*)

(*At the same time a number of young townspeople and summer visitors pass along the footpath.*)

HILDA (*half aloud, to* LYNGSTRAND). Just look,—don't she and father look like an engaged couple!

BALLESTED (*who has overheard*). It is summer time, little miss.

ARNHOLM (*looks towards* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA). The English steamer is under way.

BOLETTA (*goes to the fence*). You can see her best from here.

LYNGSTRAND. The last trip of the season.

BALLESTED. "Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as the poet says. It is sad, Mrs. Wangel! And I hear we are to lose you for a time: you go out to Skioldvik to-morrow, don't you?

WANGEL. No—that plan has fallen through: to-night we two have changed our minds.

ARNHOLM (*looking from one to the other*). Ah,—really!

BOLETTA (*coming forward*). Father—is this true?

HILDA (*going to* ELLIDA). Are you going to stay with us after all?

ELLIDA. Yes, dear Hilda—if you'll have me.

HILDA (*struggling between tears and joy*). Oh,—fancy asking if I will——!

ARNHOLM (*to* ELLIDA). This is really quite a surprise.

ELLIDA (*with a grave smile*). Well, you see, Mr. Arnholm——. Do you remember what we were speaking of yesterday? When you've once for all become a land-animal—it isn't so easy to find your way back again to the sea; nor to its life either.

BALLESTED. Why, that's just the case of my mermaid!

ELLIDA. Very much, yes.

BALLESTED. Only with this difference, that the mermaid—she dies of it. Human beings, on the contrary—they can acclam—acclimatise themselves. Yes, I assure you, Mrs. Wangel, they *can* acclimatise themselves.

ELLIDA. Yes, in freedom they can, Mr. Ballested.

WANGEL. And on their own responsibility, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA (*quickly, holding out her hand to him*). That is just it.

(*The great steamer glides noiselessly down the fiord. The music is heard closer inshore.*)

HEDDA GABLER.

(1890.)

Characters.

JÖRGEN[1] TESMAN, *holder of a scholarship for the study of the history of civilisation.*[2]
HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife.*
MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt.*
MRS. ELVSTED.
ASSESSOR[3] BRACK.
EILERT LÖVBORG.
BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans.*

The action takes place at Tesman's villa, in the west end of Christiania.

[1] Pronounce *Yörgen* (*g* hard).
[2] *Kulturhistorie.*
[3] A Judge of the Supreme Court.

HEDDA GABLER.

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

Act First.

(*A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the outer room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumnal foliage. An oval table, covered with a cloth and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. In the corner to the right, a corner settle and a small round table. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a whatnot with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments. —Against the back wall of the inner room a sofa, a table, and a couple of chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets stand about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.*)

(MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by* BERTA, *who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper.* MISS TESMAN *is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a grey walking costume.* BERTA *is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.*)

MISS TESMAN (*stops close to the door, listens, and says softly:*) Upon my word I don't believe they're stirring yet!

BERTA (*also softly*). I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got in last night. And then, when they got home!—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN. Well well—let them have their sleep out. But we'll take care they get a good breath of the fresh morning air when they *do* appear.

(*She goes to the glass door and throws it wide open.*)

BERTA (*at the table, perplexed, with the bouquet in her hand*). I declare there isn't a bit of room left —for the bouquet I mean, Miss.

(*She places it on the piano.*)

MISS TESMAN. So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part from you.

BERTA (*on the point of weeping*). And do you think it wasn't to me, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.[1]

MISS TESMAN. We must make the best of it, Berta.

[1] Pronounce *Reena.*

After all, there's nothing else for it. Jörgen can't do without you, you see—absolutely can't. He's had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA. Ah but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl too! *She'll* never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I shall manage to teach her. And of course, you know, I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, my dear Berta.

BERTA. Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I won't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN. Oh well—at first you'll perhaps find it a little difficult——

BERTA. For most like she'll be terribly particular.

MISS TESMAN. You may be sure of that—General Gabler's daughter! Just think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA. Yes indeed—I remember well enough! —But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt then that she and Mr. Tesman would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN. Nor I.—But by-the-bye, Berta—while I remember: in future you mustn't call Jörgen Mr. Tesman. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA. Yes, the young mistress mentioned that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—now, while he's been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a single word of it, until he told me himself upon the pier.

BERTA. Well well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people too.

MISS TESMAN. No no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. (*Nods significantly.*) But let me tell you we may have to call him something still finer before long.

BERTA. You don't say so! What can it be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN (*smiling*). Hm—wouldn't you like to know!—(*With emotion.*) Ah, dear dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now and see what his little boy has grown into! (*Looks around.*) But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture?

BERTA. The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

MISS TESMAN. Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

BERTA. Yes, that's what I understood — from the mistress. Mr. Tesman — the doctor — he said nothing.

(JÖRGEN TESMAN *comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, stoutish, with a round, open, cheerful face, light*

hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable, indoor clothes.)

MISS TESMAN. Good morning, good morning, Jörgen!

TESMAN (*in the doorway between the rooms*). Aunt Julia! Dear Aunt Julia! (*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*) Come all this way—so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN. In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN. Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier, eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Assessor Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But of course you saw what a lot of boxes Hedda had, that she couldn't do without.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, she had certainly plenty of boxes.

BERTA (*to* TESMAN). Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN. No thanks, Berta—you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA (*going towards the right*). Very well.

TESMAN. But look here—take this portmanteau with you.

BERTA (*taking it*). I'll put it in the attic.

(*She goes out by the hall door.*)

TESMAN. Fancy, Aunt—I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't believe how much I've picked up from all the records I've been examining—curious old matters that no one has had any idea of——

MISS TESMAN. Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, Jörgen.

TESMAN. No, that I haven't. But now take off your bonnet, Aunt. See! Let me untie the strings —eh?

MISS TESMAN (*while he does so*). Well well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN (*with the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides*). Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

MISS TESMAN. I bought it on Hedda's account.

TESMAN. On Hedda's account? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happen to go out together.

TESMAN (*patting her cheek*). You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. (*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*) And now, look here—let's sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

(*They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*)

MISS TESMAN (*takes both his hands and looks at him*). What a delight it is to have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, Jörgen! My Jörgen —my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN. And do you think it isn't a delight for

me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia? You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, I know you'll always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN. And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I mayn't lose her yet awhile! For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my life, Jörgen—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN (*stroking her back*). There there there——!

MISS TESMAN (*suddenly changing her tone*). And to think that here are you a married man, Jörgen!—And that you, of all people, should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN (*hums a little, and smiles complacently*). Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes —eh?

MISS TESMAN. And then this fine long wedding-tour you've had! More than five—nearly six months——

TESMAN. Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I've had to do so much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Aunt.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, I suppose so. (*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*) But listen now, Jörgen—haven't you anything—anything special to tell me?

TESMAN. As to our trip?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. No, I don't know of anything except what I've told you in my letters. I've taken a doctor's degree down there—I told you that yesterday, didn't I?

MISS TESMAN. Yes yes, you did. But I mean—haven't you any—any—what shall I say—expectations——?

TESMAN. Expectations?

MISS TESMAN. Why you know, Jörgen—I'm your old aunt!

TESMAN. Well, of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN. Ah!

TESMAN. I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN. Oh yes, a professor——

TESMAN. Or rather—I may say I'm certain of it. But my dear Aunt—you know all about that already!

MISS TESMAN (*laughing softly*). Yes, of course I do. You're quite right. (*Changing the subject.*) But we were talking about your trip. It must have cost a great deal of money, Jörgen?

TESMAN. Well, you see—my large travelling-scholarship went a good way.

MISS TESMAN. But I can't understand how you can have made it suffice for two.

TESMAN. No, that's not so easy to understand —eh?

MISS TESMAN. And especially travelling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN. Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda *had* to have this trip, Aunt! She really *had* to. Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN. No no, I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays. —But tell me now—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN. Yes, you may be sure I have. I've been afoot ever since daylight.

MISS TESMAN. And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN. I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we're to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlour and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN (*laughing softly*). Oh my dear Jörgen, I daresay you'll find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN. Why of course you're quite right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN. I'm specially pleased on Hedda's account. Before we were engaged she said over and over again that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.[1]

[1] In the original, "Statsrådinde Falks villa"—showing that it had belonged to the widow of a cabinet minister.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, how lucky that this very house should happen to come into the market, just after you had started.

TESMAN. Yes, Aunt Julia, we were evidently in luck's way—eh?

MISS TESMAN. But it's expensive, my dear Jörgen! You'll find it very expensive, all this.

TESMAN (*looks at her, a little cast down*). Yes, I suppose I shall, Aunt!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, frightfully!

TESMAN. How much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

TESMAN. Well, fortunately Assessor Brack has secured the most favourable terms for me,—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I've given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN. Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia —what sort of security could *you* give?

MISS TESMAN. I have given an assignment on our annuity.

TESMAN (*jumps up*). What! On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

TESMAN (*placing himself before her*). Have you gone out of your senses, Aunt! Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN. Well well, don't get so excited

about it. It's only a matter of form you know. Assessor Brack assured me of that; for it was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

TESMAN. Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless——

MISS TESMAN. You'll have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little——! To eke things out a bit at the start——! Why it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

TESMAN. Oh Aunt—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

MISS TESMAN (*rises and lays her hands on his shoulders*). Have I any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You who have had neither father nor mother to cling to. And now we've reached the goal, Jörgen! Things have looked black enough for us, sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you've nothing to fear.

TESMAN. Yes, it's really marvellous how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN. And the people who opposed you—who wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, Jörgen! Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—And now he has to lie on the bed he has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away I mean.

MISS TESMAN. Only that I'm told he has published a new book.

TESMAN. What! Eilert Lövborg? Recently—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether there's anything in it! Ah, when *your* new book appears—that will be another story, Jörgen! What is it to be about?

TESMAN. It will deal with the domestic industry of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

TESMAN. However, it may be some time before the book's ready. I have all these piles of extracts to put in order first, you see.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. It's not for nothing that you're my poor brother's son.

TESMAN. I'm looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And, most of all, now that you have got the wife of your heart, my dear Jörgen.

TESMAN (*embracing her*). Oh yes, yes, Aunt Julia! Hedda is the crown of my happiness! (*Looks towards the doorway.*) I believe I hear her coming—eh?

(HEDDA *enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of twenty-nine. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-grey eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of a pretty medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning-gown.*)

MISS TESMAN (*going to meet* HEDDA). Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome!

HEDDA (*holds out her hand*). Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

MISS TESMAN (*with some embarrassment*). Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA. Oh yes, thanks! Passably.

TESMAN (*laughing*). Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

HEDDA. Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. (*Looking towards the left.*) Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the veranda door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

MISS TESMAN (*going towards the door*). Well then we'll shut it.

HEDDA. No no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN (*at the door*). All right—all right.—There now, Hedda,—now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA. Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers——. But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you. Now that I've seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

TESMAN. Give her my very best love, Aunt; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by-the-bye, Jörgen—(*Feeling in her dress pocket*), —I'd almost forgotten this. I have something for you here.

TESMAN. What is it, Aunt? Eh?

MISS TESMAN (*produces a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him*). Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN (*opening the parcel*). Well, I declare!—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

HEDDA (*beside the whatnot on the right*). Well, what is it?

TESMAN. My old morning-shoes! My slippers!

HEDDA. Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them terribly. (*Goes up to her.*) Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA (*going towards the stove*). Thanks, I really don't care about it.

TESMAN (*following her*). Only think—ill as she was, and confined to her couch, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh you can't think how many associations cling to them.

HEDDA (*at the table*). Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN. Of course not for Hedda, Jörgen.

TESMAN. Well, but I think now that she belongs to the family——

HEDDA (*interrupting*). We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Not get on with Berta?

TESMAN. Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

HEDDA (*pointing*). Look there! She's left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

TESMAN (*in consternation, drops the slippers on the floor*). Why, Hedda——!

HEDDA. Fancy, if any one should come and see it!

TESMAN. But Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

HEDDA. Is it?

MISS TESMAN (*takes the bonnet*). Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I really didn't look closely at it, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN (*tying on the bonnet*). Let me tell you it's the first time I've worn it—the very first time.

TESMAN. And a very pretty bonnet it is too—quite gorgeous!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it's no such great things, Jörgen. (*Looks around her.*) My parasol——? Ah, here. (*Takes it.*) For this is mine too—(*mutters*)—not Berta's.

TESMAN. A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Very handsome indeed.

TESMAN. Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Aunt, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome *she* is!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely. (*She nods and goes towards the right.*)

TESMAN (*following*). Yes, but have you noticed

how fat and flourishing she looks? How she's filled out on the journey?

HEDDA (*crossing the room*). Oh, do be quiet——!

MISS TESMAN (*who has stopped and turned*). Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see——

HEDDA (*at the glass door, impatiently*). Oh, you can't see anything!

TESMAN. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol——

HEDDA (*curtly, interrupting*). I'm exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN. So you insist; but I'm quite certain you're not. Don't you agree with me, Aunt?

MISS TESMAN (*who has been gazing at her with folded hands*). Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. (*Goes up to her, takes her head with both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair.*) God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for Jörgen's sake.

HEDDA (*gently freeing herself*). Oh—! Let me go.

MISS TESMAN (*in quiet emotion*). I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN. No you won't, will you, Aunt? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Good-bye—good-bye!

(*She goes out by the hall door.* TESMAN *accompanies her. The door remains standing half open.* TESMAN *can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers.*)

(*In the meantime,* HEDDA *walks about the room raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out.*)

(*Presently* TESMAN *returns and closes the door behind him.*)

TESMAN (*picks up the slippers from the floor*). What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA (*once more calm and mistress of herself*). I'm only looking at the leaves. They're so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN (*wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table*). Well you see we're well into September now.

HEDDA (*again restless*). Yes, to think of it!—Already in—in September.

TESMAN. Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA. I scarcely know her, you see. Is she not often so?

TESMAN. No, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA (*leaving the glass door*). Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

TESMAN. Oh scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment——

HEDDA. But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! People don't do things of that sort.

TESMAN. Well you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA. In any case I'll soon make it all right with her.

TESMAN. Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would!

HEDDA. When you call this afternoon you might invite her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN. Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

HEDDA. What is it?

TESMAN. If you could only prevail on yourself to say *du*[1] to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No no, Tesman—you mustn't ask that of me. I've told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

TESMAN. Well well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you——

HEDDA. Hm—I really don't see——

(*She goes up towards the middle doorway.*)

TESMAN (*after a pause*). Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with all the other things.

TESMAN. The first time I draw my salary, we'll see about exchanging it.

HEDDA. No, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room, and then get another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

TESMAN (*a little taken aback*). Yes—of course we could do that.

[1] *Du* = thou; Tesman means, "If you could persuade yourself to *tutoyer* her."

HEDDA (*takes up the bouquet from the piano*). These flowers weren't here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN. Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

HEDDA (*examining the bouquet*). A visiting-card. (*Takes it out and reads:*) "Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

TESMAN. No. Whose? Eh?

HEDDA. The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN. Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife! Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA. Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've been told.

TESMAN (*laughing*). Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA. It's odd that she should call upon us. I've scarcely seen her since we left school.

TESMAN. I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

HEDDA (*after a moment's thought, says suddenly*). Tell me, Tesman—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lövborg is living?

TESMAN. Yes, he's somewhere in these parts.

(BERTA *enters by the hall door.*)

BERTA. That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. (*Pointing.*) The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA. Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

(BERTA *opens the door for* MRS. ELVSTED, *and goes out herself.*—MRS. ELVSTED *is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than* HEDDA. *She wears a dark visiting-dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion.*)

HEDDA (*receives her warmly*). How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted? It's delightful to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED (*nervously, struggling for self-control*). Yes, it's a long time since we met.

TESMAN (*gives her his hand*). And we too—eh?

HEDDA. Thanks for your lovely flowers——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, not at all—I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away——

TESMAN. Have you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. I arrived yesterday about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you weren't at home.

HEDDA. In despair! How so?

TESMAN. Why, my dear Mrs. Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted——

HEDDA. I hope you're not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

HEDDA (*laying the bouquet on the table*). Come—let us sit on the sofa——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I'm too restless to sit down.

HEDDA. Oh no, you're not. Come here.

(*She draws* MRS. ELVSTED *down upon the sofa and sits at her side.*)

TESMAN. Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted——?

HEDDA. Has anything particular happened at your home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and no. Oh—I'm so anxious you shouldn't misunderstand me——

HEDDA. Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I suppose that's what you've come for—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—of course it is. Well then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that Eilert Lövborg is in town, too.

HEDDA. Lövborg——!

TESMAN. What! Has Eilert Lövborg come back? Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Well well—I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. He's been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

HEDDA. But, my dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does *he* interest you?

MRS. ELVSTED (*looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly*). He was the children's tutor.

HEDDA. Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA. Your step-children's, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN (*somewhat hesitatingly*). Then was he—

I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. For the last two years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN. Has it indeed? Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA. I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands—I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

TESMAN. Then why didn't he remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN. Yes, by-the-bye, Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilisation—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well and been so much read—and made such a sensation——

TESMAN. Has it indeed? It must be something he's had lying by since his better days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN. Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah yes, if only it would last!

HEDDA. Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not yet. I have had such a business to find out his address. But this morning I discovered it at last.

HEDDA (*looks searchingly at her*). Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband—hm——

MRS. ELVSTED (*starting nervously*). Of my husband! What?

HEDDA. That he should send *you* to town on such an errand—that he doesn't come himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I—I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA (*with a slight smile*). Ah, that's another matter.

MRS. ELVSTED (*rising quickly and uneasily*). And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lövborg kindly if he comes to you! And that he's sure to do. You see you were such great friends in the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

TESMAN. We used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED. That's why I beg so earnestly that you—you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. Oh, you'll promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

TESMAN. With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing——

HEDDA. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how very, very kind of

you! (*Presses his hands.*) Thanks, thanks, thanks! (*Frightened.*) You see, my husband is so very fond of him!

HEDDA (*rising*). You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he won't come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN. Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED (*imploringly*). Oh if you only would!

TESMAN. I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. (*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, and hands it to him.*) Here it is.

TESMAN. Good, good. Then I'll go in—— (*Looks about him.*) By-the-bye,—my slippers? Oh, here.

(*Takes the packet, and is about to go.*)

HEDDA. Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one too.

TESMAN. Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED. But please, please don't say a word to show that I have anything to do with it.

TESMAN. No, how could you think I would? Eh?

(*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*)

HEDDA (*goes up to* MRS. ELVSTED, *smiles, and says in a low voice*). There! We killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED. What do you mean?

HEDDA. Didn't you see that I wanted him to go?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, to write the letter——

HEDDA. And that I might speak to you alone.

MRS. ELVSTED (*confused*). About the same thing?

HEDDA. Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED (*apprehensively*). But there *is* nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

HEDDA. Oh yes, but there is. There's a good deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cosy, confidential chat.

(*She forces* MRS. ELVSTED *to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*anxiously, looking at her watch*). But, my dear Mrs. Tesman, I was really on the point of going.

HEDDA. Oh, you can't be in such a hurry.—Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh that's just what I care least to speak about.

HEDDA. But to me, dear——? Why, weren't we schoolfellows?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but you were in the class above me. Oh, how dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA. Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

HEDDA. Did I?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, and once you said you'd burn it off my head.

HEDDA. Oh that was all nonsense, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I was so silly at that time.—And since then, too—we've drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

HEDDA. Well then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we said *du*[1] to each other; and we called each other by our Christian names——

MRS. ELVSTED. No, you're surely wrong in that.

HEDDA. No, I'm positive I'm not! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we're going to renew our old friendship. (*Draws the footstool closer to* MRS. ELVSTED.) There now! (*Kisses her cheek.*) You must say *du* to me and call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED (*presses and pats her hands*). Oh, how good and kind you are! I'm not used to such kindness.

HEDDA. There there there! And I shall say *du* to you, as in the old days, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED. My name is Thea.[2]

HEDDA. Why, of course! I meant Thea. (*Looks at her compassionately.*) So you're not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if I only had a home! But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

HEDDA (*looks at her for a moment*). I almost suspected as much.

MRS. ELVSTED (*gazing helplessly before her*). Yes—yes—yes.

[1] See footnote, p. 260. [2] Pronounce *Tora* and *Taya*.

HEDDA. I don't quite remember—wasn't it as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED. I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was then an invalid,—and rarely left her room. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

HEDDA. And then—ultimately—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED (*sadly*). Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see—about how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED. My marriage?

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Five years ago.

HEDDA. To be sure; it must be that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh those five years——! Or rather the last two or three of them! Oh, if you[1] could only imagine——

HEDDA (*giving her a little slap on the hand*). *De?* Fie, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I will try—— Well, if—you could only imagine and understand——

HEDDA (*lightly*). Eilert Lövborg has been in your neighbourhood about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED (*looks at her doubtfully*). Eilert Lövborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA. Had you known him before, in town here?

MRS. ELVSTED. Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name of course.

[1] Mrs. Elvsted here uses the formal pronoun *De*, whereupon Hedda rebukes her. In her next speech Mrs. Elvsted says *du*.

HEDDA. But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA. No, that's clear.—And your husband——? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

HEDDA (*leaning against the arm of the chair*). Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA. What sort of a man *is* your husband, Thea? I mean—you know—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED (*evasively*). I'm sure he intends to do everything for the best.

HEDDA. I should think he must be altogether too old for you. He's more than twenty years your senior, isn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED (*irritably*). Yes, that along with the rest. Everything about him is repellent to me! We haven't a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

HEDDA. But isn't he fond of you all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh I really don't know. I think he only regards me as a useful chattel. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I'm not expensive.

HEDDA. That's stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED (*shakes her head*). It can't be

otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for any one but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA. And for Eilert Lövborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED (*looking at her*). For Eilert Lövborg? What puts that in your head?

HEDDA. Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town—— (*Smiling almost imperceptibly.*) And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED (*with a little nervous twitch*). Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. (*Vehemently, but not loudly.*) No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

HEDDA. Why, my dear Thea——?

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, to make a long story short: My husband didn't know that I was coming.

HEDDA. What! Your husband didn't know it!

MRS. ELVSTED. No, of course not. Besides, he was away from home himself—he was travelling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in future.

HEDDA. Well? And then?

MRS. ELVSTED. So I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And then I left the house.

HEDDA. Without a word?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and took the train straight to town.

HEDDA. Why, my dear, good Thea—to think of you plucking up courage!

MRS. ELVSTED (*rises and crosses the room*). What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA. But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED (*at the table, looks at her*). Back to *him?*

HEDDA. Of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. I shall never go back to him again.

HEDDA (*rising and going towards her*). Then you've left your home for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

HEDDA. But then—to take flight so openly!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA. But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. They may say what they like, in heaven's name. (*Seats herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*) I have done nothing but what I *had* to do.

HEDDA (*after a short silence*). And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know yet. I only know that I *must* live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA (*takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands*). My dear Thea—how did this—this friendship—between you and Eilert Lövborg come about?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh it grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA. Indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and so he dropped them.

HEDDA (*concealing an involuntary smile of scorn*). Then you've reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. So he himself says, at any rate. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

HEDDA. Did he give *you* lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA. Oh he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

HEDDA. You were close comrades, then?

MRS. ELVSTED (*eagerly*). Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that's the very word he used!—Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; but I can't; for I don't know how long it will last.

HEDDA. Are you so uncertain of him?

MRS. ELVSTED (*sadly*). The shadow of a woman stands between Eilert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA (*looks at her anxiously*). Who can *that* be?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. Some one he knew in his—in his past. Some one he has never been able wholly to forget.

HEDDA. What has he told you—about this?

MRS. ELVSTED. He has only once—vaguely—alluded to it.

HEDDA. Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED. He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA (*with cold composure*). Oh nonsense! People don't do that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And that's why I think it must have been that red-haired singing-woman whom he once——

HEDDA. Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED. For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

HEDDA. Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED (*wringing her hands*). And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she's in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do——

HEDDA (*glancing towards the inner room*). Hush! Here comes Tesman. (*Rises and whispers.*) Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED (*springing up*). Oh yes—yes! For heaven's sake——!

(JÖRGEN TESMAN, *with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room.*)

TESMAN. There now—I've finished the epistle.

HEDDA. That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a moment—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN. Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA (*takes it*). I will tell her to.

(BERTA *enters from the hall.*)

BERTA. Assessor Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

HEDDA. Yes, ask Assessor Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

BERTA (*taking the letter*). Yes, ma'am.

(*She opens the door for* ASSESSOR BRACK *and goes out herself.* BRACK *is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop.*)

ASSESSOR BRACK (*with his hat in his hand, bowing*). May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA. Of course one may.

TESMAN (*presses his hand*). You are welcome at any time. (*Introducing him.*) Assessor Brack—Miss Rysing——

HEDDA. Oh——!

BRACK (*bowing*). Ah—delighted——

HEDDA (*looks at him and laughs*). It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Assessor!

BRACK. Do you find me—altered?

HEDDA. A little younger, I think.

BRACK. Thank you so much.

TESMAN. But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She's actually——

HEDDA. Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Assessor Brack for all the trouble he has taken——

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—it was a pleasure to me——

HEDDA. Yes, you're a friend indeed. But here stands Thea all impatience to be off—so *au revoir*, Assessor. I shall be back again presently.

(*Mutual salutations.* MRS. ELVSTED *and* HEDDA *go out by the hall door.*)

BRACK. Well, is your wife tolerably satisfied——?

TESMAN. Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course she talks of a little re-arrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

BRACK. Indeed!

TESMAN. But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she'll look after what's wanting herself.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK. Thanks, for a moment. (*Seats himself beside the table.*) There's something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN. Indeed? Ah, I understand! (*Seating himself.*) I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that's coming now. Eh?

BRACK. Oh, the money question isn't so very pressing; though for that matter, I wish we had gone a little more economically to work.

TESMAN. But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You,

who know her so well——. I couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

BRACK. No, no—that's just the difficulty.

TESMAN. And then—fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK. Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK. Nothing exactly definite——. (*Interrupting himself.*) But by-the-bye—I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN. Well?

BRACK. Your old friend, Eilert Lövborg, has returned to town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Indeed? How did you learn it?

TESMAN. From that lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of course—he's been living up in their regions.

TESMAN. And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he's quite a reformed character!

BRACK. So they say.

TESMAN. And then he has published a new book—eh?

BRACK. Yes, indeed he has.

TESMAN. And I hear it has made some sensation!

BRACK. Quite an unusual sensation.

TESMAN. Fancy—isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents——. I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretrievably to ruin.

BRACK. That was what everybody thought.

TESMAN. But I can't imagine what he'll take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh?

(*During the last words*, HEDDA *has entered by the hall door.*)

HEDDA (*to* BRACK, *laughing with a touch of scorn*). Tesman's for ever worrying about how people are to make their living.

TESMAN. Well you see, dear—we're talking about poor Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA (*glancing at him rapidly*). Oh, indeed? (*Seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove and asks indifferently:*) What's the matter with him?

TESMAN. Well—no doubt he's run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what's to become of him.

BRACK. Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

TESMAN. Well?

BRACK. You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely given him up.

BRACK. At one time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN. At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

HEDDA. Who knows? (*With a slight smile.*) I hear they've reclaimed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's——

BRACK. And then this book that he has published——

TESMAN. Well well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I've just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK. But my dear fellow, you're coming to my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN. Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

BRACK. But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

TESMAN. What makes you think that? Eh?

BRACK (*with a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair*). My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I oughtn't to keep you in the dark about something which—which——

TESMAN. Which concerns Eilert——?

BRACK. Both you and him.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Assessor, out with it.

BRACK. You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN (*jumping up uneasily*). Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

BRACK. The nomination may perhaps depend on the result of a competition——

TESMAN. Competition! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA (*leans further back in her chair*). Aha—aha!

TESMAN. But who can my competitor be? Surely not——?

BRACK. Yes, precisely—Eilert Lövborg.

TESMAN (*clasping his hands*). No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

BRACK. Hm—that's what it may come to, all the same.

TESMAN. Well but, Assessor Brack, it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. (*Gesticulates with his arms.*) For—just think—I'm a married man! We have married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt Julia too. Good heavens, they'd as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK. Well well well—no doubt you'll get it ultimately; only after a contest.

HEDDA (*immovable in her arm-chair*). Fancy, Tesman—there'll be a sort of sporting interest in that.

TESMAN. Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it.

HEDDA (*as before*). I'm not at all indifferent. I'm most eager to see who wins.

BRACK. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it's well that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you're threatening.

HEDDA. This can't make any difference.

BRACK. Indeed? That's another matter. Good-

bye! (*To* TESMAN.) I'll look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—your news has quite bewildered me.

HEDDA (*reclining, holds out her hand*). Good-bye, Assessor; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

BRACK. Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN (*accompanying him to the door*). Good-bye, my dear Assessor! You must really excuse me——

(ASSESSOR BRACK *goes out by the hall door.*)

TESMAN (*crosses the room*). Oh Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

HEDDA (*looks at him, smiling*). Do *you* do *that?*

TESMAN. Yes, dear—there's no denying—it *was* adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

HEDDA. Perhaps you're right there.

TESMAN. Well—at any rate, we've got our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA (*rising slowly and wearily*). It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

TESMAN. Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Well well well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to invite Aunt Julia now and then.—Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear——!

HEDDA. Of course I can't have my man in livery just yet.

TESMAN. Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.

HEDDA. And the saddle-horse I was to have had——

TESMAN (*aghast*). The saddle-horse!

HEDDA. ——I suppose I mustn't think of that now.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no!—that's as clear as daylight!

HEDDA (*goes up the room*). Well—I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

TESMAN (*beaming with joy*). Oh thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA (*in the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn*). My pistols, Jörgen.

TESMAN (*in alarm*). Your pistols!

HEDDA (*with cold eyes*). General Gabler's pistols.

(*She goes out through the inner room, to the left.*)

TESMAN (*rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her:*) No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

Act Second.

(*The room at the* TESMANS' *as in the first Act, except that the piano has been removed and an elegant little writing-table with book-shelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away.* MRS. ELVSTED'S *bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.*)

(HEDDA, *in a reception dress, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*)

HEDDA (*looks down the garden, and calls:*) So you're here again, Assessor!

BRACK (*is heard calling from a distance*). As you see, Mrs. Tesman!

HEDDA (*raises the pistol and points*). Now I'll shoot you, Assessor Brack!

BRACK (*calling, unseen*). No no no! Don't stand aiming at me!

HEDDA. That comes of sneaking in by the back way.[1] (*She fires.*)

BRACK (*nearer*). Are you out of your senses——!

HEDDA. Oh dear—did I happen to hit you?

BRACK (*still outside*). I wish you'd let these pranks alone!

HEDDA. Come in then, Assessor.

[1] "Bagveje" means both "back ways" and "underhand courses."

(ASSESSOR BRACK, *dressed as though for a gentlemen's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*)

BRACK. What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport yet? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA. Oh, I'm only firing in the air.

BRACK (*gently takes the pistol out of her hand*). Allow me, madam! (*Looks at it.*) Ah—I know this pistol well. (*Looks around.*) Where is the case? Ah, I see. (*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it.*) Now we won't play at that game any more to-day.

HEDDA. Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK. Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA (*closing the glass door*). Not one. I suppose all our circle are still out of town.

BRACK. And is Tesman not at home either?

HEDDA (*at the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts*). No. He rushed off to his aunts directly after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK. Hm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

HEDDA (*turning her head to look at him*). Why stupid?

BRACK. Because if I'd thought of it I'd have come a little—earlier.

HEDDA (*crossing the room*). Then you'd have found no one to receive you; for I've been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

BRACK. And isn't there any sort of little chink that we could hold a parley through?

HEDDA. You've forgotten to arrange one.

BRACK. That was another piece of stupidity.

HEDDA. Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman won't be home for some time yet.

BRACK. Never mind; I shan't be impatient.

(HEDDA *seats herself in the corner of the sofa.* BRACK *lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short silence. They look at each other.*)

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK (*in the same tone*). Well?

HEDDA. It was I that said "Well?" first.

BRACK (*bending a little forward*). Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Miss Hedda.[1]

HEDDA (*leaning further back in the sofa*). Doesn't it seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this forenoon.

BRACK. You mean—since our last confidential talk? Our last *tête à tête?*

HEDDA. Well yes—since you put it so.

BRACK. I have wished every day that you were home again.

HEDDA. And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK. You? Really, Miss Hedda? And I thought you'd been enjoying your tour so much!

[1] Brack, in the original, says "Mrs. Hedda"; but as this is contrary to English usage, and as the note of familiarity would have been lacking in "Mrs. Tesman," I have ventured to suppose that he ignores her marriage and reverts to the form of address no doubt customary between them of old.

HEDDA. Oh yes, that was very likely!

BRACK. But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA. Oh, *he!* You see, he thinks there's nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you call them.

BRACK (*with a spice of malice*). Well, that's his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

HEDDA. Yes, of course; and I suppose when it's one's vocation——. But *I!* I assure you, my dear Assessor, I have been mortally bored.

BRACK (*sympathetically*). Do you really say so? In downright earnest?

HEDDA. Yes, you can surely understand it——! To go for whole six months without meeting a soul that knew anything of *our* circle, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

BRACK. Yes, yes—I too should feel that a deprivation.

HEDDA. And then, what I found most intolerable of all——

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. ——was being for ever and a day in the company of—one and the same person——

BRACK (*with a nod of assent*). Morning, noon, and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

HEDDA. I said "for ever and a day."

BRACK. It's the same thing. But I should have thought with our excellent Tesman one could——

HEDDA. Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Assessor.

BRACK. Undeniably.

HEDDA. And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run at any rate.

BRACK. Not even—the specialist one happens to *love?*

HEDDA. Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

BRACK (*taken aback*). What do you say, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA (*half laughing, half annoyed*). You should just try it, let me tell you! To hear of nothing but the history of civilisation morning, noon, and night——

BRACK. For ever and a day——

HEDDA. Yes yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages——! That's the most disgusting part of it!

BRACK (*looks searchingly at her*). But tell me—in that case, how am I to understand your——? Hm——

HEDDA. My marrying Jörgen Tesman, you mean?

BRACK. Well, let us put it so.

HEDDA. Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK. Yes and no—Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Assessor. My hour had come. (*With a slight shudder.*) Oh no—I won't say that; nor think it either!

BRACK. You have assuredly no reason to.

HEDDA. Oh, reasons—— (*Watching him closely.*) And Jörgen Tesman—after all, you must admit that he's correctness itself.

BRACK. His correctness and respectability are beyond all question.

HEDDA. And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you?

BRACK. Ridiculous? N—no—I shouldn't exactly say so——

HEDDA. Hm. But at any rate he's a most assiduous student.—I don't see why he shouldn't in time come to the front, after all.

BRACK (*looks at her hesitatingly*). I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

HEDDA (*with an expression of fatigue*). Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I shouldn't have accepted his offer?

BRACK. No—if you look at it in *that* light——

HEDDA. It was more than my other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Assessor.

BRACK (*laughing*). Well, I can't answer for all the rest; but as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA (*jestingly*). Oh, I assure you I've never cherished any hopes with respect to *you*.

BRACK. All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend——

HEDDA. Of the master of the house, do you mean?

BRACK (*bowing*). Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but of course of the master too, in the second place. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

HEDDA. Yes, I've many a time longed for some one to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage *tête-à-têtes*——!

BRACK. Fortunately your wedding journey is over now——

HEDDA (*shaking her head*). Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK. Well, then the passengers jump out and stretch their legs a bit, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. I never jump out.

BRACK. Do you not?

HEDDA. No—because there's always some one standing by to——

BRACK (*laughing*). To look at your ankles, do you mean?

HEDDA. Precisely.

BRACK. Well but, dear me——

HEDDA (*with a gesture of repulsion*). I won't have it. I'd rather keep my seat, where I happen to be—and continue the *tête-à-tête*.

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA. Ah—*that's* quite another matter!

BRACK. A trusted, sympathetic friend——

HEDDA. ——with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

BRACK. ——and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA (*with an audible sigh*). Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

BRACK (*hears the front door open, and glances in that direction*). The triangle is closed.

HEDDA (*half aloud*). And on goes the train.

(JÖRGEN TESMAN, *in a grey walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.*)

TESMAN (*goes up to the table beside the corner settle*). Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. (*Lays them on the table.*) I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Assessor? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK (*rising*). I came in through the garden.

HEDDA. What books have you got there?

TESMAN (*stands looking them through*). Some new books bearing on my special subject, that I was bound to have.

HEDDA. Your special subject?

BRACK. Yes, books on his special subject, Mrs. Tesman.

(BRACK *and* HEDDA *exchange a smile of comprehension.*)

HEDDA. Do you need still more books on your special subject?

TESMAN. Yes, my dear Hedda, you can never have too many of them. Of course you've got to keep up with all that's written and published.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose you must.

TESMAN (*searching among the books*). And look

here—I've got hold of Eilert Lövborg's new book too. (*Offering it to her.*) Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

TESMAN. I looked into it a little on the way home.

BRACK. Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

TESMAN. I think its tone is remarkably temperate. He never wrote like that before. (*Putting the books together.*) Now I'll take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves——! And then I must change my clothes. (*To* BRACK.) I suppose we needn't start just yet? Eh?

BRACK. Oh no, we've plenty of time yet.

TESMAN. Well then, I won't hurry. (*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.*) By-the-bye, Hedda,—Aunt Julia isn't coming this evening.

HEDDA. Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away?

TESMAN. Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia? Fancy——! The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA. She always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but to-day she's much worse than usual, poor dear.

HEDDA. Oh, then it's only natural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

TESMAN. You can't think how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be, dear—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

HEDDA (*half aloud, rising*). Oh, those everlasting Aunts!

TESMAN. What?

HEDDA (*going to the glass door*). Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh, all right.

(*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*)

BRACK. What bonnet were you talking about?

HEDDA. Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there—(*Looks at him and smiles*)—and I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK (*shaking his head*). Now, my dear Miss Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

HEDDA (*nervously, crossing the room*). Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I *cannot* resist them. (*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*) Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK (*behind the easy-chair*). You're not really happy—that's at the bottom of it.

HEDDA (*looking straight before her*). I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

BRACK. Well—amongst other things, because you have got exactly the home you had set your heart on.

HEDDA (*looks up at him and laughs*). Do you too believe in that legend?

BRACK. Isn't there anything in it, then?

HEDDA. Oh yes, there's *something* in it.

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. There's this in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer——

BRACK. I, unfortunately, had to go a different way.

HEDDA. That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

BRACK (*laughing*). Oh fie, Miss Hedda! Well then—you and Tesman——?

HEDDA. Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man——

BRACK (*smiles doubtfully*). Took pity? Hm——

HEDDA. Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure heedlessness, that I would like to live in this villa.

BRACK. No more than that?

HEDDA. Not *that* evening.

BRACK. But afterwards?

HEDDA. Yes, my heedlessness had consequences, my dear Assessor.

BRACK. Unfortunately that too often happens, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between Jörgen Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well well, Assessor Brack—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

BRACK. This is exquisite! And you really didn't care a rap about it all the time?

HEDDA. No, goodness knows I didn't.

BRACK. But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

HEDDA. Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and dried rose-leaves.—But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

BRACK (*laughing*). No, I think it's rather a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

HEDDA. Yes, there's an odour of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. (*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him.*) Oh, my dear Assessor—you can't imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK. Why shouldn't you, like the rest of us, find some sort of mission in life, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA. A mission—that should interest me?

BRACK. If possible, of course.

HEDDA. Heaven knows what sort of a mission that could be. I've often thought of—— (*Breaking off.*) But that would never do either.

BRACK. Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA. If I could get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

BRACK (*laughing*). Tesman! No, really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

HEDDA. No, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

BRACK. Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he's not fit for it, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA. Because I'm bored, I tell you! (*After a pause.*) So you think it's out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

BRACK. Hm—you see, my dear Miss Hedda—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA (*rising impatiently*). Yes, there we have it! It's this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into——! (*Crosses the room.*) It's *that* that makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous!—For that's what it is.

BRACK. Now *I* should say the fault lies elsewhere.

HEDDA. Where, then?

BRACK. You've never gone through any really stimulating experience.

HEDDA. Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK. Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

HEDDA (*tossing her head*). Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shan't waste a thought upon it.

BRACK. No no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? (*Smiling.*) A new responsibility, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA (*angrily*). Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen.

BRACK (*warily*). We'll return to the subject a year hence—at the very outside.

HEDDA (*curtly*). I have no turn for anything of

the sort, Assessor Brack. No responsibilities for me!

BRACK. Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for a mission which——?

HEDDA (*beside the glass door*). Oh, be quiet, I tell you!—I often think there's only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

BRACK (*drawing near to her*). And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA (*stands looking out*). Boring myself to death. Now you know it. (*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs.*) Yes, as I thought! Here comes the professor.

BRACK (*softly, in a tone of warning*). Come, come come, Miss Hedda!

(JÖRGEN TESMAN, *dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.*)

TESMAN. Hedda, has no message come from Eilert Lövborg? Eh?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Then you'll see he'll be here presently.

BRACK. Do you really think he'll come?

TESMAN. Yes, I'm almost sure of it. For what you were saying this morning must be mere conjecture.

BRACK. You think so?

TESMAN. At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Only think!

BRACK. Well then, that's all right.

TESMAN (*placing his hat and gloves on a chair on*

the right). Yes, but you must really let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK. We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN. Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what turns up. Eh?

HEDDA (*placing* BRACK'S *hat and overcoat upon the corner settle*). And at the worst Mr. Lövborg can remain with me.

BRACK (*offering to take his things*). Oh, allow me, Mrs. Tesman!—What do you mean by "At the worst"?

HEDDA. If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN (*looks dubiously at her*). But Hedda dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

HEDDA. No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN. Oh yes, that'll be all right.

BRACK (*smiling*). And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

HEDDA. Why so?

BRACK. Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gird at my little bachelor's parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA. But no doubt Mr. Lövborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner——

(BERTA *appears at the hall door.*)

BERTA. There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am——

HEDDA. Well, show him in.

TESMAN (*softly*). I'm sure it's he! Only think!

(EILERT LÖVBORG *enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as* TESMAN, *but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of colour on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.*)

TESMAN (*goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand*). Well, my dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

EILERT LÖVBORG (*speaks in a subdued voice*). Thanks for your letter, Tesman. (*Approaching* HEDDA.) Will you too shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA (*taking his hand*). I am glad to see you, Mr. Lövborg. (*With a motion of her hand.*) I don't know whether you two gentlemen——?

LÖVBORG (*bowing slightly*). Assessor Brack, I think.

BRACK (*doing likewise*). Oh yes,—in the old days——

TESMAN (*to* LÖVBORG, *with his hands on his shoulders*). And now you must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you're going to settle in town again? Eh?

LÖVBORG. Yes, I am.

TESMAN. Quite right, quite right. Let me tell you, I've got hold of your new book; but I haven't had a moment to read it yet.

LÖVBORG. You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN. Why so?

LÖVBORG. Because there's very little in it.

TESMAN. Just fancy—how can you say so?

BRACK. But it's been very much praised, I hear.

LÖVBORG. That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what every one would agree with.

BRACK. Very wise of you.

TESMAN. Well but, my dear Eilert——!

LÖVBORG. For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

TESMAN (*a little embarrassed*). Yes, I suppose so? Eh?

LÖVBORG (*smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat-pocket*). But when this one appears, Jörgen Tesman, you'll have to read it. For this is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

TESMAN. Indeed? And what is it?

LÖVBORG. It's the continuation.

TESMAN. The continuation? Of what?

LÖVBORG. Of the book.

TESMAN. Of the new book?

LÖVBORG. Of course.

TESMAN. Why, my dear Eilert—doesn't it come down to our own days?

LÖVBORG. Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.

TESMAN. With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

LÖVBORG. No; but there's a thing or two to be

said about it all the same. (*Opens the packet.*) Look here——

TESMAN. Why, that's not your handwriting.

LÖVBORG. I dictated it. (*Turning over the pages.*) It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilising forces of the future. And here's the second —(*Running through the pages towards the end*)— forecasting the probable line of development.

TESMAN. How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA (*at the glass door, drumming on the pane*). Hm——. I daresay not.

LÖVBORG (*replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table*). I brought it with me in order to read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN. That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening——? (*Looking at* BRACK.) I don't quite see how we can manage it——

LÖVBORG. Well then, some other time. There's no hurry.

BRACK. I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg—there's a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honour of Tesman, you know——

LÖVBORG (*looking for his hat*). Oh—then I won't detain you——

BRACK. No, but listen—won't you do me the favour of joining us?

LÖVBORG (*curtly and decidedly*). No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we'll have a "lively time," as Miss Hed—as Mrs. Tesman says.

LÖVBORG. I don't doubt it. But nevertheless——

BRACK. And then you might bring your manuscript with you and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

TESMAN. Yes, think of that, Eilert,—why shouldn't you? Eh?

HEDDA (*interposing*). But, Tesman, if Mr. Lövborg would really rather not! I'm sure Mr. Lövborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

LÖVBORG (*looking at her*). With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. And with Mrs. Elvsted.

LÖVBORG. Ah—— (*Lightly.*) I saw her for a moment this forenoon.

HEDDA. Did you? Well she's coming this evening. So you see you're almost bound to remain, Mr. Lövborg, or she'll have no one to see her home.

LÖVBORG. That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I'll remain.

HEDDA. Then I have one or two orders to give the servant——

(*She goes to the hall door and rings.* BERTA *enters.* HEDDA *talks to her in a whisper, and points towards the inner room.* BERTA *nods and goes out again.*)

TESMAN (*at the same time, to* LÖVBORG). Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you're going to lecture about?

LÖVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. They told me at the bookseller's that you were going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

LÖVBORG. That's my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

TESMAN. Oh no, not in the least! But——?

LÖVBORG. I can quite understand that it must be an annoyance to you.

TESMAN (*cast down*). Oh, I can't expect you, out of consideration for me, to——

LÖVBORG. But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

TESMAN. Will you wait? Yes but—yes but—aren't you going to compete with me? Eh?

LÖVBORG. No; it's only the moral victory I care for.

TESMAN. Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh yes—I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lövborg is not going to stand in our way!

HEDDA (*curtly*). *Our* way? Pray leave *me* out of the question.

(*She goes up towards the inner room, where* BERTA *is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table.* HEDDA *nods approval, and comes forward again.* BERTA *goes out.*)

TESMAN (*at the same time*). And you, Assessor Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK. Well, I say that a moral victory—hm—may be all very fine——

TESMAN. Yes, certainly. But all the same——

HEDDA (*looking at* TESMAN *with a cold smile*). You stand there looking as if you were thunderstruck——

TESMAN. Yes—so I am—I almost think——

BRACK. Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunder-storm has just passed over?

HEDDA (*pointing towards the inner room*). Won't you take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

BRACK (*looking at his watch*). A stirrup-cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

TESMAN. A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! I'm in such good spirits now——

HEDDA. Won't you join them, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG (*with a gesture of refusal*). No, thank you. Nothing for me.

BRACK. Why bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

LÖVBORG. Perhaps not for every one.

HEDDA. I will keep Mr. Lövborg in company in the meantime.

TESMAN. Yes, yes, Hedda dear, do.

(*He and* BRACK *go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows.* EILERT LÖVBORG *remains standing beside the stove.* HEDDA *goes to the writing-table.*)

HEDDA (*raising her voice a little*). Should you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lövborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home.

(*She takes up an album which she places on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself.* EILERT LÖVBORG *approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left with his back towards the inner room.*)

HEDDA (*opening the album*). Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lövborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: "The Ortler group near Meran."

LÖVBORG (*who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly*). Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA (*glancing hastily at him*). Ah! Hush!

LÖVBORG (*repeats softly*). Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA (*looking at the album*). That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

LÖVBORG. And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA (*still turning over the pages*). Yes, you must. And I think you ought to practise in time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LÖVBORG (*in a tone of indignation*). Hedda Gabler married? And married to—Jörgen Tesman!

HEDDA. Yes—so the world goes.

LÖVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you[1] throw yourself away!

HEDDA (*looks sharply at him*). What? I can't allow this!

LÖVBORG. What do you mean?

(TESMAN *comes into the room and goes towards the sofa.*)

HEDDA (*hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone*). And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lövborg. Just look at these peaks! (*Looks affectionately up at* TESMAN.) What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN. Let me see. Oh, these are the Dolomites.

[1] He uses the familiar *du*.

HEDDA. Yes, that's it!—These are the Dolomites, Mr. Lövborg.

TESMAN. Hedda dear,—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring in a little punch after all? For you at any rate—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few sweet biscuits.

TESMAN. No cigarettes?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Good.

(*He goes into the inner room and out to the right.* BRACK *sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on* HEDDA *and* LÖVBORG.)

LÖVBORG (*softly, as before*). Answer me, Hedda—how could you go and do this?

HEDDA (*apparently absorbed in the album*). If you continue to say *du* to me I won't talk to you.

LÖVBORG. May I not say *du* even when we're alone?

HEDDA. No. You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

LÖVBORG. Ah, I understand. It is an offence against Jörgen Tesman, whom you[1]—love.

HEDDA (*glances at him and smiles*). Love? What an idea!

LÖVBORG. You don't love him, then!

HEDDA. But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness! Remember that.

LÖVBORG. Hedda—answer me one thing——

HEDDA. Hush!

[1] From this point onwards Lövborg uses the formal *De*.

(TESMAN *enters with a small tray, from the inner room.*)

TESMAN. Look here! Isn't this tempting?

(*He puts the tray on the table.*)

HEDDA. Why do you bring it yourself?

TESMAN (*filling the glasses*). Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you've poured out two glasses. Mr. Lövborg said he wouldn't have any——

TESMAN. No, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

HEDDA. Yes, by-the-bye—Mrs. Elvsted——

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA. We're so deep in these photographs. (*Shows him a picture.*) Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN. Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we passed the night——

HEDDA. ——and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN. Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! What fun!

(*He returns to the inner room and sits beside* BRACK.)

LÖVBORG. Answer me this one thing, Hedda——

HEDDA. Well?

LÖVBORG. Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not the least dash or tinge of love in it?

HEDDA. I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. (*Smilingly.*) You especially were frankness itself.

LÖVBORG. It was you that made me so.

HEDDA. As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating —something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LÖVBORG. Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not?—When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon —and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back towards us——

HEDDA. And we two on the corner sofa——

LÖVBORG. Always with the same illustrated paper before us——

HEDDA. For want of an album, yes.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda—and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that no one else knew at that time! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to make a clean breast of these things?

HEDDA. Do you think it was any power in me?

LÖVBORG. How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me——

HEDDA. Which you understood so particularly well——

LÖVBORG. How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly——

HEDDA. In roundabout terms, please observe.

LÖVBORG. Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Question me about—all that sort of thing?

HEDDA. And how could you answer, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. Yes, that's just what I can't understand —in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda —was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

HEDDA. No, not quite.

LÖVBORG. What was your motive, then?

HEDDA. Do you think it quite incomprehensible that when a young girl finds an opportunity—in all secrecy——

LÖVBORG. Well?

HEDDA. That she is glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which——

LÖVBORG. Which——?

HEDDA. ——which she is forbidden to know anything about?

LÖVBORG. So *that* was it?

HEDDA. Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LÖVBORG. Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not *that*, at any rate, have continued?

HEDDA. That was your own fault.

LÖVBORG. It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA. Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lövborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

LÖVBORG (*clenching his hands*). Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

HEDDA. Because I have such a dread of scandal.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda, you're a coward at heart.

HEDDA. A terrible coward. (*Changing her tone.*) But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you've found ample consolation up at the Elvsteds'.

LÖVBORG. I know what Thea has told you.

HEDDA. And perhaps you've told her something about us?

LÖVBORG. Not a word. She's too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA. Stupid?

LÖVBORG. She's stupid about these matters.

HEDDA. And I am cowardly. (*Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly:*) But now I'll confide something to you!

LÖVBORG (*eagerly*). Well?

HEDDA. The fact that I dared not shoot you down——

LÖVBORG. Yes!

HEDDA. ——*that* was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

LÖVBORG (*looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately*). Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I see the hidden roots of our comradeship! You[1] and I——! It was your craving for life, after all——

HEDDA (*softly, with a sharp glance*). Take care! Believe nothing of the sort!

(*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by* BERTA.)

[1] In this speech he once more says *du*. Hedda addresses him throughout as *De*.

HEDDA (*closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly:*) Ah, at last! My darling Thea,—come along!

(MRS. ELVSTED *enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*)

HEDDA (*on the sofa, stretches out her arms towards her*). My sweet Thea—you can't think how I've been longing for you!

(MRS. ELVSTED, *in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives* HEDDA *her hand.* EILERT LÖVBORG *has risen. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *greet each other with a silent nod.*)

MRS. ELVSTED. Shall I go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

HEDDA. Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They'll soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED. Are they going?

HEDDA. Yes, to a supper-party.

MRS. ELVSTED (*quickly, to* LÖVBORG). Not *you*, I hope?

LÖVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr. Lövborg remains with us.

MRS. ELVSTED (*takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side*). Oh, how nice it is here!

HEDDA. No thank you, my little Thea! Not *there!* You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I'll sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, just as you please.

(*She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on* HEDDA'S *right.* LÖVBORG *re-seats himself on his chair.*)

LÖVBORG (*after a short pause, to* HEDDA). Isn't she lovely to look at?

HEDDA (*lightly stroking her hair*). Only to look at?

LÖVBORG. Yes. For *we* two—she and I—*we* are two real comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness——

HEDDA. Not round about, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. Well——

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly, clinging close to* HEDDA). Oh, how happy I am, Hedda! For, only think, he says I have inspired him too.

HEDDA (*looks at her with a smile*). Ah! Does he say that, dear?

LÖVBORG. And then she's so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED. Good heavens—am I brave?

LÖVBORG. Exceedingly—when your comrade's interests are at stake.

HEDDA. Ah yes—courage! If one only had *that!*

LÖVBORG. What then? What do you mean?

HEDDA. Then life would perhaps be liveable, after all. (*With a sudden change of tone.*) But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA. Well then, *you*, Mr. Lövborg.

LÖVBORG. Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he doesn't either.

HEDDA (*looks fixedly at him*). Not if I wish it?

LÖVBORG. That wouldn't matter.

HEDDA (*laughing*). Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

LÖVBORG. Not in that respect.

HEDDA. But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED. Why, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG. How so?

HEDDA. Or rather on account of other people.

LÖVBORG. Indeed?

HEDDA. Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident in yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly*). Oh please, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG. People may suspect what they like—for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED (*joyfully*). Yes, let them!

HEDDA. I saw it plainly in Assessor Brack's face a moment ago.

LÖVBORG. What did you see?

HEDDA. His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go with them into the inner room.

LÖVBORG. I dared not! Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED. What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA. But the Assessor could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his.

LÖVBORG. Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

HEDDA. *I* don't say so. But that was how Assessor Brack understood it.

LÖVBORG. Well, let him.

HEDDA. Then you won't go with them?

LÖVBORG. I will remain with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, Hedda—you can surely understand that!

HEDDA (*smiles and nods approvingly to* LÖVBORG). Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and for ever! Ah, that is how a man should be! (*Turns to* MRS. ELVSTED *and caresses her.*) Well, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction——

LÖVBORG (*surprised*). Distraction!

MRS. ELVSTED (*terrified*). Hedda—oh Hedda——!

HEDDA. You can see for yourself! You haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror—— (*Interrupting herself.*) There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves!

LÖVBORG (*who has given a start*). Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA. Don't get excited! That horrid Assessor is sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG. So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly and piteously*). Oh, Hedda —now you've ruined everything!

LÖVBORG (*looks fixedly at her for a moment. His*

face is distorted). So *that* was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

MRS. ELVSTED (*imploringly*). Oh my dearest friend—only let me tell you——!

LÖVBORG (*takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, hoarse voice*). Your health, Thea!

(*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly*). Oh Hedda, Hedda—how *could* you do this?

HEDDA. *I* do it? *I?* Are you crazy?

LÖVBORG. Here's to your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth! (*He empties the glass and is about to re-fill it.*)

HEDDA (*lays her hand on his arm*). Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you're going out to supper.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no!

HEDDA. Hush! They're sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG (*putting down the glass*). Now Thea—tell me the truth——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

LÖVBORG. Did your husband know that you had come after me?

MRS. ELVSTED (*wringing her hands*). Oh Hedda—do you hear what he's asking?

LÖVBORG. Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my

help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly, in agony*). Oh, Lövborg, Lövborg——!

LÖVBORG (*seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it*). Here's a glass for the old Sheriff too!

HEDDA (*dissuasively*). No more just now. Remember, you've got to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LÖVBORG (*calmly, putting down the glass*). It was stupid of me, all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once—now I have risen again! Thanks to *you*, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED (*beaming with joy*). Oh, heaven be praised——!

(BRACK *has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and* TESMAN *rise and come into the drawing-room.*)

BRACK (*takes his hat and overcoat*). Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

HEDDA. I suppose it has.

LÖVBORG (*rising*). Mine too, Assessor Brack.

MRS. ELVSTED (*softly and imploringly*). Oh Lövborg, don't do it!

HEDDA (*pinching her arm*). They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED (*with a suppressed shriek*). Ow!

LÖVBORG (*to* BRACK). You were good enough to invite me.

BRACK. Well, are you coming after all?

LÖVBORG. Yes, many thanks.

BRACK. I'm delighted——

LÖVBORG (*to* TESMAN, *putting the parcel of MS. in his pocket*). I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the press.

TESMAN. Fancy — that'll be delightful. — But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home? Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, we'll manage that somehow.

LÖVBORG (*looking towards the ladies*). Mrs. Elvsted? Of course I'll come again and fetch her. (*Approaching.*) At ten or thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman? Will that do?

HEDDA. Certainly. That will do capitally.

TESMAN. Well, then that's all right. But you mustn't expect *me* so early, Hedda.

HEDDA. Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

MRS. ELVSTED (*trying to conceal her anxiety*). Well then, Mr. Lövborg—I shall remain here until you come.

LÖVBORG (*with his hat in his hand*). Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA. Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen——!

BRACK. Why unseen?

HEDDA. In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Assessor Brack.

BRACK (*laughing*). I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN (*also laughing*). Come, you're a nice one, Hedda! Only think!

BRACK. Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LÖVBORG (*bowing*). About ten o'clock, then.

(BRACK, LÖVBORG, *and* TESMAN *go out by the hall door. At the same time,* BERTA *enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table; she goes out by the way she came.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*who has risen and is wandering restlessly about the room*). Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

HEDDA. At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I hope he may.

HEDDA. And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh God!—if he would only come as you see him now!

HEDDA. He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise! (*Rises and approaches* THEA.) You may doubt him as long as you please; *I* believe in him. And now we'll try——

MRS. ELVSTED. You have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED. Have you not the power?

HEDDA. I have not—and have never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Not your husband's?

HEDDA. Do you think *that's* worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made *you* so rich! (*Clasps her passionately in her arms.*) I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED. Let me go! Let me go! I'm afraid of you, Hedda!

BERTA (*in the middle doorway*). Tea is laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA. Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

HEDDA. Nonsense! First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lövborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair.

(*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *almost by force towards the middle doorway.*)

Act Third.

(*The room at the* TESMANS'. *The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out.*)

(MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair.* HEDDA, *fully dressed, is lying sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*after a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to herself*). Not yet!—Oh God—oh God—not yet!

(BERTA *slips cautiously in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*turns and whispers eagerly*). Well, has any one come?

BERTA (*softly*). Yes, a girl has just brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED (*quickly, holding out her hand*). A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA. No, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, indeed.

BERTA. It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTA (*laying down the letter*). I think I'd better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

BERTA (*putting out the lamp*). It's daylight already, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, broad day! And he's not come back yet——!

BERTA. Lord bless you, ma'am—I guessed how it would be.

MRS. ELVSTED. You guessed?

BERTA. Yes, when I saw that a certain person had returned to town—and that he went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED. Don't speak so loud. You're wakening Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA (*looks towards the sofa and sighs*). No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't I put some wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks, not for me.

BERTA. Oh, very well.

(*She goes softly out by the hall door.*)

HEDDA (*is wakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up*). What's that——?

MRS. ELVSTED. It was only the servant——

HEDDA (*looking about her*). Oh, we're here——! Yes, now I remember. (*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes.*) What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED (*looks at her watch*). It's past seven.

HEDDA. When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED. He hasn't come.

HEDDA. Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED (*rising*). No one has come.

HEDDA. Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning——

MRS. ELVSTED (*wringing her hands*). And *how* I watched and waited for him!

HEDDA (*yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth*). Well well—we might have saved ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you get a little sleep?

HEDDA. Oh yes; I believe I've slept pretty well. Haven't you?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA (*rises and goes towards her*). There there there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

HEDDA. Why, of course it has been a very late affair at Assessor Brack's——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—that's clear enough. But all the same——

HEDDA. And then you see Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. (*Laughing.*) Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show himself either—immediately after a jollification.

MRS. ELVSTED. But then, dear—where can he have gone?

HEDDA. He has of course gone to his Aunts' and

slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he can't be with *them;* for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies.

HEDDA. Indeed? (*Looks at the address.*) Why yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own hand. Well then he has remained at Assessor Brack's. And as for Eilert Lövborg—he's sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh Hedda, you're just saying things you don't believe a bit.

HEDDA. You're really a little blockhead, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh yes, I suppose I am.

HEDDA. And how mortally tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I *am* mortally tired.

HEDDA. Well then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA. I'm sure you would.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, but your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once——

HEDDA. I'll take care to let you know when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Yes, rely upon me. Just you go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks; then I'll try to.

(*She goes off through the inner room.*)

(HEDDA *goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains. The broad daylight falls into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it, and arranges her hair. Next she goes to the hall door and presses the bell-button.*)

(BERTA *presently appears at the hall door.*)

BERTA. Did you want anything, ma'am?

HEDDA. Yes; you must put some more wood in the stove. I'm shivering.

BERTA. Bless me — I'll soon make it burn up. (*She rakes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them; then stops and listens.*) That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA. Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

BERTA. It'll soon catch up.

(*She goes out by the hall door.*)

(HEDDA *kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove.*)

(*After a short pause,* JÖRGEN TESMAN *enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on the points of his toes towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*)

HEDDA (*at the stove, without looking up*). Good morning.

TESMAN (*turns*). Hedda! (*Approaching her.*) Good heavens—why are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I'm up very early this morning.

TESMAN. And I never doubted you were sound asleep yet! Only think, Hedda!

HELDA. Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

TESMAN. Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA. Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN. Ah, to be sure.

HEDDA (*closes the door of the stove and rises*). Had you such a delightful evening then?

TESMAN. Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA. No, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

TESMAN. Oh yes,—for once in a way. Especially the beginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—only think! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA (*seating herself by the table on the right*). Well? Tell me, then——

TESMAN (*sitting on a foot-stool near the stove*). Oh Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that's going to be! I believe it's one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Only think!

HEDDA. Yes yes; I don't care about that——

TESMAN. I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA. A horrid feeling?

TESMAN. I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Oh yes, I'm thinking!

TESMAN. And then how pitiful to think that he —with all his gifts—should be irreclaimable, after all.

HEDDA. I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

TESMAN. No, not at all—I mean that he's incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

HEDDA. And what came of it all—in the end?

TESMAN. Well, I think it might best be described as an orgie, Hedda.

HEDDA. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vine-leaves? No, I didn't see anything of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honour of the woman who had inspired him in his work—that's how he put it.

HEDDA. Did he name her?

TESMAN. No, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You'll see he did!

HEDDA. Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN. On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us too, to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you know, we agreed to see Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA. I daresay.

TESMAN. But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or rather the melancholy part of it. I declare I'm almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you——

HEDDA. Oh, go on——!

TESMAN. Well, as we were going towards town, you know, I happened by chance to drop a little

behind the rest. Only for a minute or two—only think!

HEDDA. Yes yes yes, but——?

TESMAN. And then, as I hurried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, how should I know!

TESMAN. You mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear! Promise me, for Eilert's sake. (*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*) Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA. Isn't that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN. Yes, it's the whole of his precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he'd gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably——

HEDDA. But why didn't you give him back the parcel at once?

TESMAN. I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in——

HEDDA. Didn't you tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN. Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA. So no one knows that Eilert Lövborg's papers are in your possession?

TESMAN. No. And no one *must* know it.

HEDDA. Then what did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN. I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Only think!

HEDDA. Indeed! They must have taken him home, then.

TESMAN. Yes, they must have, I suppose. And Brack, too, left us.

HEDDA. And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN. Well, I and some of the others went home with one of our jolly companions, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now, when I've rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA (*holds out her hand for the packet*). No—don't give it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, I really mustn't.

HEDDA. You mustn't?

TESMAN. No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he'll be in when he wakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

HEDDA (*looking searchingly at him*). Can't such a thing be reproduced? Written over again?

TESMAN. No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see——

HEDDA. Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that—— (*Lightly.*) But, by-the-bye—here's a letter for you.

TESMAN. Fancy——!

HEDDA (*handing it to him*). It came early this morning.

TESMAN. It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? (*He lays the packet on the other foot-stool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up.*) Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA. Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN. And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

HEDDA (*suppressing a smile*). Will you run?

TESMAN. Oh, my dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Only think!

HEDDA (*rises and says wearily and repellently*). No, no, don't ask me. I *will* not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

TESMAN. Well, well, then——! (*Bustling around.*) My hat——? My overcoat——? Oh, in the hall——. I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda! Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, if you run——

(BERTA *appears at the hall door.*)

BERTA. Assessor Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

TESMAN. At this time! No, I can't possibly receive him.

HEDDA. But I can. (*To* BERTA.) Ask Assessor Brack to come in.

(BERTA *goes out.*)

HEDDA (*quickly, whispering*). The parcel, Tesman!

(*She snatches it up from the stool.*)

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA. No, no, I'll keep it till you come back.

(*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the bookcase.* TESMAN *stands in a flurry of haste and cannot get his gloves on.*)

(ASSESSOR BRACK *enters from the hall.*)

HEDDA (*nodding to him*). Come, you're an early bird.

BRACK. Yes, don't you think so? (*To* TESMAN.) Are you on the move, too?

TESMAN. Yes, I *must* rush off to my aunts'. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

BRACK. Dear me, is she indeed? Then for any sake don't let me detain you. At such a critical moment——

TESMAN. Yes, I must really rush—— Good-bye! Good-bye!

(*He hastens out by the hall door.*)

HEDDA (*approaching*). You seem to have had a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Assessor Brack.

BRACK. I assure you I haven't had my clothes off, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. Not you either?

BRACK. No, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

HEDDA. Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

BRACK. I've heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lövborg was not with them, I fancy?

HEDDA. No, they had taken him home before that.

BRACK. Tesman too?

HEDDA. No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK (*smiling*). Jörgen Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. Yes, heaven knows he is. But there's something behind all this.

BRACK. Yes, I don't say there isn't.

HEDDA. Well then, sit down, my dear Assessor, and tell your story in comfort.

(*She seats herself to the left of the table;* BRACK *sits near her, at the long side of the table.*)

HEDDA. Now then?

BRACK. I had special reasons for following up the track of my guests—or rather of some of my guests—last night.

HEDDA. Eilert Lövborg's among the rest, perhaps.

BRACK. Frankly—yes.

HEDDA. Now you really whet my curiosity——

BRACK. Do you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA. If it isn't quite unmentionable, tell me.

BRACK. Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated soirée.

HEDDA. Of the lively kind?

BRACK. Of the very liveliest——

HEDDA. Tell me more of this, Assessor Brack——

BRACK. Lövborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation; for now, as you know, he has put on a new man.

HEDDA. Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

BRACK. Well, you see, Miss Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening——

HEDDA. Yes, I hear he found inspiration with you.

BRACK. Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his resolution; for we menfolk are unhappily not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA. Oh I'm sure you're an exception, Assessor Brack. But as to Lövborg——?

BRACK. To make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK. It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the soirée, to a select circle of her lady friends and their admirers.

HEDDA. Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK. Precisely.

HEDDA. A sort of a—singer?

BRACK. Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress—of men—Miss Hedda. You've no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lövborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

HEDDA. And how did all this end?

BRACK. Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows——

HEDDA. Lövborg and she?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

HEDDA. And what came of it all?

BRACK. It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA. The police too?

BRACK. Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lövborg, crazy being that he is.

HEDDA. How so?

BRACK. He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn his coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA. How have you learnt all this?

BRACK. From the police themselves.

HEDDA (*gazing straight before her*). So that is what has happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vine-leaves, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA (*changing her tone*). But tell me now, Assessor—what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lövborg's movements so carefully?

BRACK. In the first place, it couldn't be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police court that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA. Will the matter come into court then?

BRACK. Of course. However, I shouldn't have troubled so very much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA. Why so, Assessor Brack?

BRACK. Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA. Oh, how can you think such a thing!

BRACK. Good heavens, Miss Hedda — we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted won't be in any hurry to leave town again.

HEDDA. Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK. Not a single *home.* Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA. You mean that mine ought to be, too?

BRACK. Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into——

HEDDA. ——into the triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. For me it would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

HEDDA (*looks at him with a smile*). So you want to be the one cock on the fowl-roost—that's your aim.

BRACK (*nods slowly and lowers his voice*). Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA (*her smile vanishing*). I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

BRACK. Do you think so?

HEDDA. I'm beginning to think so. And I devoutly trust you may never obtain any sort of hold over me.

BRACK (*laughing equivocally*). Well well, Miss

Hedda—perhaps you're right there. Who knows what I might be capable of in that case.

HEDDA. Come come now, Assessor Brack! That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK (*rising*). Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously formed and maintained.

HEDDA. There I agree with you.

BRACK. Well, now I've said all I had to say; and I'd better be getting back to town. Good-bye, Miss Hedda.

(*He goes towards the glass door.*)

HEDDA (*rising*). Are you going through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it's a short cut for me.

HEDDA. And then it's a back way, too.

BRACK. Quite true. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

HEDDA. When there's ball practice going on, you mean?

BRACK (*in the doorway, laughing to her*). Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA (*also laughing*). Oh no, when there's only one cock on the fowl-roost——

(*They exchange laughing nods of farewell. He goes. She closes the door behind him.*)

(HEDDA, *who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes* LÖVBORG'S *packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents.* BERTA

is heard speaking loudly in the hall. HEDDA *turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer and lays the key on the inkstand.*)

(EILERT LÖVBORG, *with his greatcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat disturbed and irritated.*)

LÖVBORG (*looking towards the hall*). And I tell you I must and will come in! There!

(*He closes the door, turns, sees* HEDDA, *at once regains his self-control, and bows.*)

HEDDA (*at the writing-table*). Well, Mr. Lövborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

LÖVBORG. You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

HEDDA. How do you know that she is still with me?

LÖVBORG. They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA (*going to the oval table*). Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that?

LÖVBORG (*looks inquiringly at her*). Notice anything about them?

HEDDA. I mean, did they seem to think it odd.

LÖVBORG (*suddenly understanding*). Oh yes, of course! I'm dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice anything. I suppose Tesman isn't up yet?

HEDDA. No—I think not——

LÖVBORG. When did he come home?

HEDDA. Very late.

LÖVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. Yes, I gathered that you'd had an exceedingly jolly evening at Assessor Brack's.

LÖVBORG. Nothing more?

HEDDA. I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy——

(MRS. ELVSTED *enters through the curtains of the middle doorway.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*going towards him*). Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

LÖVBORG. Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED (*looks anxiously at him*). What is too late?

LÖVBORG. Everything is too late now. It is all up with me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—don't say that!

LÖVBORG. You'll say the same when you hear——

MRS. ELVSTED. I won't hear anything!

HEDDA. Perhaps you'd prefer to talk to her alone? If so, I will leave you.

LÖVBORG. No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LÖVBORG. It isn't last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED. What is it then——?

LÖVBORG. I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED. Part!

HEDDA (*involuntarily*). I knew it!

LÖVBORG. You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LÖVBORG. Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED (*despairingly*). Then what am I to do with my life?

LÖVBORG. You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED. But you know I can't!

LÖVBORG. Try if you can't, Thea. You must go home again——

MRS. ELVSTED (*in vehement protest*). Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be too! I won't let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA (*half aloud, in suspense*). Ah yes—the book!

LÖVBORG (*looks at her*). My book and Thea's; for that's what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I feel that it is. And that's why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honour pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

LÖVBORG. Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED. Never appear!

LÖVBORG. *Can* never appear.

MRS. ELVSTED (*in agonised foreboding*). Lövborg —what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA (*looks anxiously at him*). Yes, the manuscript——?

MRS. ELVSTED. Where is it?

LÖVBORG. Oh Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I *will* know. I demand to be told at once.

LÖVBORG. The manuscript——. Well then — I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED (*shrieks*). Oh no, no——!

HEDDA (*involuntarily*). But that's not——

LÖVBORG (*looks at her*). Not true, you think?

HEDDA (*collecting herself*). Oh well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable——

LÖVBORG. It's true, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED (*wringing her hands*). Oh God—oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

LÖVBORG. I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too——?

MRS. ELVSTED. And you did this last night?

LÖVBORG. Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces—and strewed them on the fiord—far out. There there's cool sea-water at any rate—let them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they'll sink—deeper and deeper—like me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you know, Lövborg, that what you've done with the book—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG. Yes, you are right. It's like a sort of child-murder.

MRS. ELVSTED. How could you, then——! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA (*almost inaudibly*). Ah, the child——

MRS. ELVSTED (*breathing heavily*). It's all over then. Well well, now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you won't leave town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me.

(*She goes out by the hall door.*)

HEDDA (*stands waiting for a moment*). So you're not going to see her home, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

LÖVBORG. It won't end with last night—of that I'm positive. And now, you see, I've no taste for that sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA (*looking straight before her*). So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. (*Looks at him.*) But how could you treat her so heartlessly, all the same?

LÖVBORG. Oh, don't call it heartless!

HEDDA. To go and destroy what her mind has been dwelling on for months and years! You think that isn't heartless!

LÖVBORG. To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA. The truth!

LÖVBORG. First promise me—give me your word

—that what I now tell you Thea shall never know.

HEDDA. I give you my word.

LÖVBORG. Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

HEDDA. About the manuscript?

LÖVBORG. Yes. I haven't torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fiord.

HEDDA. No, no——. But—where is it then?

LÖVBORG. I have destroyed it all the same—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA. I don't understand.

LÖVBORG. Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

HEDDA. Yes, so she said.

LÖVBORG. But to kill his child—that's not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA. Not the worst?

LÖVBORG. No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

HEDDA. Then what is the worst?

LÖVBORG. Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said: "Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows what hands it may have fallen into—who may have had their clutches on it."

HEDDA. Well—but after all you know—this was only a book——

LÖVBORG. Thea's pure soul was in that book.

HEDDA. Yes, so I understand.

LÖVBORG. And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

HEDDA. What path do you mean to take then?

LÖVBORG. None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

HEDDA (*a step nearer him*). Eilert Lövborg—listen to me; will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

LÖVBORG. Beautifully? (*Smiling.*) With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days——?

HEDDA. No, no. I don't believe in the vine-leaves any longer. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-bye! You must go now—and don't come here any more.

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. And remember me to Jörgen Tesman.

(*He is on the point of going.*)

HEDDA. No, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you.

(*She goes to the writing-table, opens the drawer and takes out and opens the pistol-case; then returns to* LÖVBORG *with one of the pistols.*)

LÖVBORG (*looks at her*). This? Is *this* the memento?

HEDDA (*nodding slowly*). Do you recognise it? It was aimed at you once.

LÖVBORG. You should have used it then.

HEDDA. Take it—and do *you* use it now.

LÖVBORG (*puts the pistol in his breast pocket*). Thanks!

HEDDA. Beautifully, Eilert Lövborg. Promise me that!

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

(*He goes out by the hall door.* HEDDA *listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove, with the packet in her lap. Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet.*)

HEDDA (*throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself*). Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Wavy-haired Thea! (*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*) Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. (*Throws the rest in.*) I am burning—I am burning your child.

Act Fourth.

(*The same rooms at the* TESMANS'. *It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close.*)

(HEDDA, *dressed in black, walks to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.*)

(BERTHA *enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settle in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right.* HEDDA *goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.*)

(*Shortly afterwards,* MISS TESMAN, *in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall.* HEDDA *goes towards her and holds out her hand.*)

MISS TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, here you see me in the garb of woe; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

HEDDA. I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, he promised me he would. But nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in

the house of life—I ought myself to announce the death.

HEDDA. That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, Rina should not have left us just *now*. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA (*changing the subject*). She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing Jörgen once more—and bidding him good-bye. Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA. No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN. No thanks, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA. Can't I help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, you mustn't think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

HEDDA. One isn't always mistress of one's thoughts——

MISS TESMAN (*continuing*). Ah yes, it's the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

(JÖRGEN TESMAN *enters by the hall door.*)

HEDDA. Ah, you've come at last!

TESMAN. You here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Think of that!

MISS TESMAN. I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

TESMAN. No; I'm really afraid I've forgotten half of it. I must come to you again to-morrow. To-day my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN. Why, my dear Jörgen, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN. Mustn't——? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN. Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do—rejoice that she is at rest.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

HEDDA. You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Just at first, yes. But that won't last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

TESMAN. Indeed? Who do you think will take it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

HEDDA. Would you really take such a burden upon you again?

MISS TESMAN. A burden! Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA. But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands——

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick people; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have some one to live for. Well, heaven be

praised, there may soon be something for an old aunt to do in this house, too.

HEDDA. Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

TESMAN. Yes, only think, how nicely we three should get on together if——

HEDDA. If——?

TESMAN (*uneasily*). Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. (*Smiling.*) And perhaps Hedda has something to tell you too, Jörgen. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. (*Turning at the door.*) How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

TESMAN. Yes, think of that, Aunt Julia! Eh?

(MISS TESMAN *goes out by the hall door.*)

HEDDA (*follows* TESMAN *coldly and searchingly with her eyes*). I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects *you* more than it does your Aunt Julia.

TESMAN. Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I'm so terribly uneasy about.

HEDDA (*quickly*). Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN. I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was in safe keeping.

HEDDA. Well? Didn't you find him?

TESMAN. No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN. And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces—eh?

HEDDA. Yes; so he declared.

TESMAN. Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA. No, he didn't get it.

TESMAN. But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA. No. (*Quickly.*) Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN. No; I thought I'd better not. But you ought to have told *him.* Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

HEDDA (*cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair*). I haven't got it.

TESMAN. Haven't got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA. I've burnt it—every line of it.

TESMAN (*with a start of terror*). Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA. Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN. Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

HEDDA. It's so, nevertheless.

TESMAN. Do you know what you've done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Think of that! Just ask Assessor Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

HEDDA. I advise you not to speak of it—either to Assessor Brack, or to any one else.

TESMAN. But how could you do anything so unheard-of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

HEDDA (*suppressing an almost imperceptible smile*). I did it for your sake, Jörgen.

TESMAN. For my sake!

HEDDA. This morning, when you told me how he had been reading aloud to you——

TESMAN. Yes yes—what then?

HEDDA. You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

TESMAN. Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA. All the same, I couldn't bear the idea that any one should throw you into the shade.

TESMAN (*in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*). Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you show your love like that before. Only think!

HEDDA. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—— (*Impatiently, breaking off*). No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. *She'll* tell you.

TESMAN. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! (*Clasps his hands together.*) Great heavens! do you really mean it, eh?

HEDDA. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN (*laughing in irrepressible glee*). The servant! Well, why should you mind, Hedda? It's only my old Bertha! Why, I'll tell Bertha myself.

HEDDA (*clenching her hands together in desperation*). Oh, it's killing me,—it's killing me, all this!

TESMAN. What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA (*coldly, controlling herself*). All this—jubilation—Jörgen.

TESMAN. Jubilation! Do you wonder that I'm overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I'd better not say anything to Bertha.

HEDDA. Oh, why not that too?

TESMAN. No no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then, that you've begun to call me by my Christian name too! Think of that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA. When she hears that I have burned Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN. No, by-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so passionately,[1] Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA. I think you'd better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

TESMAN. I will indeed, some time or other. (*Looks uneasy and downcast again.*) But the manuscript—the manuscript! I can't bear to think of poor Eilert.

(MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as in the first Act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation*). Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

HEDDA. What is the matter with you, Thea?

[1] Literally, "That you burn for me."

TESMAN. Something about Eilert Lövborg again —eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! I'm dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

HEDDA (*seizes her arm*). Ah,—do you think so!

TESMAN. Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. I heard them talking of him at the *pension*—just as I entered the sitting-room. Oh, the most incredible rumours are afloat about him to-day.

TESMAN. Yes, fancy, so I heard! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Think of that!

HEDDA. Well—what did they say at the *pension?*

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else——. They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN (*moving about uneasily*). We must hope —we must hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no; I'm sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or——

TESMAN. The hospital?

HEDDA. No—surely that can't be!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA. You could make up your mind to that, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. What else could I do? I really couldn't bear the suspense any longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't find him either—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN. Yesterday! Fancy, how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I'm sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN. Hedda dear, how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries——?

HEDDA. No, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

(ASSESSOR BRACK, *with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which* BERTHA *opens and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence.*)

TESMAN. Oh, is that you, my dear Assessor? Eh?

BRACK. Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

TESMAN. I can see you've heard the news about Aunt Rina?

BRACK. Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN. Isn't it sad—eh?

BRACK. Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN (*looks doubtfully at him*). Has anything else happened?

BRACK. Yes.

HEDDA (*in suspense*). Anything sad, Assessor Brack?

BRACK. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED (*unable to restrain her anxiety*). Oh! it's something about Eilert Lövborg!

BRACK (*with a glance at her*). What makes you think that, Madam? Perhaps you've already heard something——?

MRS. ELVSTED (*in confusion*). No, nothing, but——

TESMAN. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK (*shrugging his shoulders*). Well, I'm sorry to say Eilert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. He's lying at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED (*shrieks*). Oh God! oh God——!

TESMAN. To the hospital! And at the point of death!

HEDDA (*involuntarily*). So soon then——!

MRS. ELVSTED (*wailing*). And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA (*whispers*). Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED (*not heeding her*). I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK. It is useless, Madam. No one will be admitted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, but tell me what has happened? What is it?

TESMAN. You don't mean to say that he has himself——! Eh?

HEDDA. I'm sure he has.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you——?

BRACK (*keeping his eyes fixed upon her*). Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN. Himself, then? Think of that!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED (*with an effort at self-control*). When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon, between three and four.

TESMAN. But, good Lord, where did he do it—eh?

BRACK (*with some hesitation*). Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that can't be; for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK. Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found——. He had shot himself—in the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA (*to* BRACK). Was it in the breast?

BRACK. Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA. Not in the temple?

BRACK. In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Well, well; the breast is a good place, too.

BRACK. How do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA (*evasively*). Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN. And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

BRACK. Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I feel it. The end! The end! Oh, Hedda——!

TESMAN. But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

BRACK (*curtly*). Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

HEDDA (*in a clear voice*). At last a bold deed!

TESMAN (*terrified*). Good heavens, Hedda! what are you saying?

HEDDA. I say there is beauty in this.

BRACK. Hm, Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN. Beauty! Think of that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

HEDDA. Eilert Lövborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, you mustn't think that was how it happened! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

TESMAN. In despair!

HEDDA. That he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK (*starting*). The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, last night.

TESMAN (*whispers softly*). Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK. Hm, very extraordinary.

TESMAN (*crosses the room*). To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalised his name——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN. Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I wouldn't give——

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED (*searches in the pocket of her dress*). Look here. I've kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA (*a step forward*). Ah——!

TESMAN. You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I have them. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are——

TESMAN. Oh, do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED (*hands him a bundle of papers*). But they're in such disorder—all mixed up.

TESMAN. Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh yes, at least let us try——

TESMAN. We *will* manage it! We must! I will dedicate my life to this task!

HEDDA. You, Jörgen! Your life?

TESMAN. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps.

TESMAN. And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we'll give our whole minds to it. There's no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN. Well then, come here. I can't rest until we've looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Assessor. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it were possible!

(TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers.* HEDDA *crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently* BRACK *goes up to her.*)

HEDDA (*in a low voice*). Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

BRACK. Freedom, Miss Hedda? Well, of course it's a release for him——

HEDDA. I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world,—a deed of immutable beauty.

BRACK (*smiling*). Hm—my dear Miss Hedda——

HEDDA. Oh, I know what you're going to say. For you're a kind of specialist too, like—hm!

BRACK (*looking hard at her*). Eilert Lövborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA. I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lövborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the courage to turn away from the banquet of life—so early.

BRACK. I am sorry, Miss Hedda,—but I must dispel a pleasant illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion?

BRACK. Which couldn't have lasted long in any case.

HEDDA. What do you mean?

BRACK. Eilert Lövborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA. Not voluntarily!

BRACK. No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA (*eagerly*). Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK. For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealised the facts a little.

HEDDA. What *are* the facts?

BRACK. First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA. At the hospital?

BRACK. Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What more have you concealed?

BRACK. This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Oh, that can make no difference.

BRACK. Perhaps it may. For you must know that Eilert Lövborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA (*makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again*). Impossible, Assessor Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. He came to claim something, he said, which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child——

HEDDA. Ah—so that was why——

BRACK. I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

HEDDA. Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found?

BRACK. Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

HEDDA. In the breast—yes.

BRACK. No—in the bowels.

HEDDA (*looks up at him with an expression of loathing*). That too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean?

BRACK. There is one point more, Miss Hedda—another element of vulgarity in the affair.

HEDDA. And what is that?

BRACK. The pistol he carried——

HEDDA (*breathless*). Well? What of it?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA. (*leaps up*). Stolen it! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK. No other explanation is possible. He *must* have stolen it——. Hush!

(TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing-room.*)

TESMAN (*with the papers in both his hands*). Hedda dear, it's almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

HEDDA. Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN. Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

HEDDA. If you like. (*Rapidly.*) No, wait! Let me clear it first!

TESMAN. Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There's plenty of room.

HEDDA. No no, let me clear it, I say! I'll take these things in and put them on the piano. There!

(*She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the bookcase, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left.* TESMAN *lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *sit down and proceed with their work.* HEDDA *returns.*)

HEDDA (*behind* MRS. ELVSTED'S *chair, gently ruffling her hair*). Well, my sweet Thea,—how goes Eilert Lövborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED (*looks dispiritedly up at her*). Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

TESMAN. We *must* manage it. I'm determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me.

(HEDDA *goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.* BRACK *stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.*)

HEDDA (*whispers*). What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK (*softly*). That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why stolen it?

BRACK. Because every other explanation *ought* to be impossible, Miss Hedda.

HEDDA. Indeed?

BRACK (*glances at her*). Eilert Lövborg was here this morning, wasn't he?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. Part of the time.

BRACK. Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA. Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK. And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA. I had it locked up in——

BRACK. Well, Miss Hedda?

HEDDA. The case stood there, on the writing-table.

BRACK. Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Well, you needn't. I saw the pistol found in Lövborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA. Have you it with you?

BRACK. No; the police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with it?

BRACK. Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK (*bends over her and whispers*). No, Hedda Gabler,—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA (*looks frightened at him*). And if you do *not* say nothing,—what then?

BRACK (*shrugs his shoulders*). There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA (*firmly*). Death rather than that.

BRACK (*smiling*). That's what people *say*—but they don't *do* it.

HEDDA (*without replying*). And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered, what then?

BRACK. Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal.

HEDDA. The scandal!

BRACK. Yes, the scandal—of which you have such a mortal dread. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she's an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA. But *I* have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK. No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lövborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA (*lets her head sink*). That's true. I did not think of that.

BRACK. Well, fortunately, there's no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA (*looks up at him*). So I am in your power,

Assessor Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK (*whispers softly*). Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! (*Rises impetuously.*) No, I can't endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK (*looks half mockingly at her*). People somehow get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA (*returns his look*). Yes, perhaps. (*She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates* TESMAN'S *intonations.*) Well? Are you getting on, Jörgen? Eh?

TESMAN. Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

HEDDA (*as before*). Think of that! (*Passes her hands softly through* MRS. ELVSTED'S *hair.*) Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg?

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way.

HEDDA. Oh, that will come too—in time.

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

HEDDA. Is there nothing I can do to help you two?

TESMAN. No, nothing in the world. (*Turning his head.*) I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack!

BRACK (*with a glance at* HEDDA). With the very greatest of pleasure.

HEDDA. Thanks. But I am tired this evening I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

TESMAN. Yes, do dear—eh?

(HEDDA *goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*)

MRS. ELVSTED (*starts from her chair*). Oh—what is that?

TESMAN (*runs to the doorway*). Why, my dearest Hedda, don't play dance-music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too!

HEDDA (*puts her head out between the curtains*). And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.—After this, I will be quiet. (*Closes the curtains again.*)

TESMAN (*at the writing-table*). It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted,—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I shall come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work *there*—eh?

HEDDA (*in the inner room*). I hear what you're saying, Tesman. But how am *I* to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN (*turning over the papers*). Oh, I daresay Assessor Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I'm not here.

BRACK (*in the arm-chair, calls out cheerfully*). Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We'll get on capitally together, we two!

HEDDA (*speaking loud and clear*). Yes, don't you

hope so, Assessor Brack? You, as the one cock on the fowl-roost——

(*A shot is heard within.* TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, *and* BRACK *leap to their feet.*)

TESMAN. Oh, now she's playing with those pistols again.

(*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by* MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries.* BERTHA *enters in alarm from the right.*)

TESMAN (*shrieks to* BRACK). Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Think of that!

BRACK (*half fainting in the arm-chair*). Heaven help us—people don't *do* such things!

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